THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEPAL

From Tradition to Modernity

Edited
by

Gérard Toffin

सांस्कृतिक केन्द्र
Culturel
Français

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Table of Contents

1. **Toffin G.** : *Introduction*
2. **Baral I. & D.**
   Cultural Pluralism in Nepal:
   Problems and Prospects of its Preservation

Religion and society

3. **Hollé A., Toffin G. & Rimal K. P.**
   The 32 Maharjan tols of Kathmandu City.
4. **Pandey R. N.**
   Religious Traditions and Beliefs of the People of Western Nepal.
5. **Ramirez P.**
   A Ritual King: some Ethnographic Datas on the Dasain Festival in Argha Rajasthal.
6. **Buffetrille K.**
   Preliminary Remarks on a Sherpa Pilgrimage.

Change and development

7. **Helffer M.**
   A Recent Phenomenon: the Emergence of Buddhist Monasteries around the Stupa of Bodnath.
8. **Gurung J.**
   Tradition and Adaptation: A Study in Continuity and Change in the Gurung Culture of Nepal.
9. **Mercier N.**
   Socio-Economic Determinants of Women's Work in the Service Sector.
10. **Jest C.**
    French Anthropological Studies and Development Issues in Nepal.

Documentation

11. **Boulnois L., Massonet P., Toffin G. & Vigny F.**
    French Research on the Anthropology of Nepal 1954-1993. A Bibliography.

Franco-Nepalese Seminar, March 1992

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEPAL

INTRODUCTION

Gérard Toffin

The Anthropology of Nepal is a wide and rich field of research, indeed one of the most exciting of all South Asia. Nepal has a unique diversity of ethnic groups, most of them having preserved their own life-style and language up to the present time. From the cultural point of view, this Himalayan kingdom is the place where traditions that have vanished elsewhere or that cannot be observed in other neighbhouring countries can still be studied. It is also a place where the Indian civilization meets the Sino-Tibetan cultural area. The Himalaya as a whole has often been characterized by its interface, and from this interface spring very complex social and religious contexts. It is well known, for instance, how sophisticated is the syncretism which has developed over the centuries in the Kathmandu Valley.

During the last thirty years, French researchers have contributed a great deal to the study of the people of Nepal. They have published a considerable amount of ethnographical material on culture and society. We have worked not only in the Tibetan or Tibeto-Burman communities but also in the hills with Parbatiyas and in some parts of the Terai. Although our results have been mainly published in French, some studies have been recently translated into English and other translations are in preparation.

One aim of the Franco-Nepalese seminar organised jointly by the French Cultural Centre, the French Embassy and the French National Centre for Scientific Research in Kathmandu (18-20 March 1992) was to present to our Nepalese counterparts the results of some recent research undertaken in the field. Unfortunately, not all the French anthropologists who work in Nepal could attend the meeting. Alexander W. Macdonald, Marc Gaborieau, Philippe Sagant, Véronique Bouillier were not present. Bernard Pignède, who studied the Gurungs in the sixties, passed away more than twenty years ago. Among the young scholars who, for various reasons, could not join the seminar, we should mention Gisèle Krauskopff who studied the religious and social structure of the Tharus of Dang, Anne de Sales who has just published a book on the shamanism of the Northern Magars, Marie Lecomte-Tilouine who undertook research in a village of Gulmi district and Brigitte Steinmann who worked among the Eastern Tamangs. Nevertheless I do hope that this present publication will give readers an idea of what has been achieved and what is being currently done by French anthropologists in Nepal.

Most of these researchers belong to the National Centre for Scientific Research. CNRS is a public institution employing about 27,000 civil servants scattered all over France. Among these, about 11,000 scholars are working in various fields ranging from biology, mathematics, to philosophy, linguistics, and so forth. The primary aim of CNRS is basic research but it is closely linked with the major universities of France and with several industrial agencies. As far as the humanities and social sciences are concerned, 20 CNRS scholars from different disciplines devote most of their time to studying the Himalayas. To these we must add some professorships in various French universities. This is a unique situation for the Western countries: Paris is certainly a leading place, along with Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America for Himalayan studies.

Most of the French anthropologists working in Nepal have focused until now on specific ethnic groups or castes. They have placed their emphasis on a monographic type of approach and their publications include much ethnographical descriptions which could be used for comparative studies latter on. Since about 20 years ago, we have also tried to develop a more holistic approach, scholars of various disciplines working together in a specific location. This was the case, for instance, in the Langtang area, in Panauti, in the Ganesh Himal region, in Salme (Nuwakot district) and nowdays in Gulmi-Argha Khanchi. That is why we invited, among others, sociologists, geographers, ecologists, linguists, historians and so forth to participate and to contribute to the seminar. These integrated ventures proved to be very useful not only to raise new methodological issues or to train students, but also for a better understanding of the main problems, especially the relationships between Man and Nature.

Our collaboration with Nepalese colleagues and institutions dates back to the very beginning. We have achieved or we are achieving common projects with Tribhuvan University, the Department of Archaeology and the Royal Nepal Academy. Two Nepalese anthropologists have been trained in France and received Ph.D from French Universities. Young French social scientists preparing a doctoral dissertation on Nepal are usually affiliated to Tribhuvan University. I hope that such exchange of scholars could be developed further in the future and that other young Nepalese students will have the opportunity to study for degrees in France in the field of anthropology. One other important target of this workshop was to explore new areas of collaboration and to strengthen the already existing relationships between French and Nepalese scholars.

A few words need to be said about development. Nepal is today facing tremendous transformations. Population growth, migration, uncontrolled urbanization, westernization of life-style, improvement of communications are a formidable threat to the continuity of the living cultural heritage of Nepal.

How can the preservation of the various traditions and different languages of Nepal be made compatible with these necessary developments is a controversial point. Is the disruption of the traditional social fabric an unavoidable concomitant of development ? Such issues are beyond an anthropologist's control. But what I am firmly convinced of is the following: at a time when so much of the cultural heritage of Nepal is in decline or under threat, it is crucial that the voices of social scientists should be heard by the government and by development agencies. Besides raising heritage consciousness in the community, the anthropologist can be a link between tradition and change, between local people and decision makers. The recent political changes, and the new policy of the Nepalese authorities in cultural matters lead me to think that it is an appropriate time to raise this issue.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to the French Embassy and the French Cultural Centre, especially to M.Chiesa, M. Romnicianu, M. Ciccarone and Mrs. Berthome-Lama who provided the material framework for the meeting and this present publication. I want also once again to thank all the Nepalese and the French scholars for their participation to this lively seminar.

CULTURAL PLURALISM IN NEPAL : PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ITS PRESERVATION

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Introduction

Nepal is home to peoples of different ethnic, religious and language groups. To a great extent this diversity has been fostered by the presence of natural physical barriers in the form of mountains, rivers too difficult to be forded, thick and malaria-infested jungles of the Terai lowlands. It has also been fostered by the fact that Nepal till the mid-eighteenth century comprised several principalities scattered all over, whose rulers patronised and safeguarded different cultural traditions of the regions they ruled over, thereby contributing to the cultural diversity that exists in Nepal in various forms even today. After the political unification of Nepal, under the leadership of Prithivi Narāyan Shah, attempt was made to maintain a unity within this vast and complex diversity.

Contribution to this unity was also made by the people of Nepal who did not allow themselves to be hemmed in by mere physical constraints. Mountain passes were found, jungles cleared and bridges built over the rivers. As a result channels of communication were opened between people of different caste, ethnic and groups. This in turn enabled streams of migrants and immigrants to travel between the different parts of the country. The former came mostly from the north, whereas the immigrants came from the south, that is from India. Consequently, interaction between people of different historical, political, economic background and tradition, led to a cultural diffusion, amidst a process of acculturation, in the places where the migrants came to settle down.

Religious groups

These cultural influences which came to Nepal from its northern and southern borders have now become an integral component of Nepali society. One can find the impact of two major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, prevailing in Nepal. The former dominates among the Indo-Aryans in the Terai lowlands whose southern border are coterminous with that of the Gangetic plains of India, the cradle of Hinduism. The latter, Buddhism, has followers among the Tibeto-Mongoloid groups of people, particularly those living in the northernmost regions having frequent interection with the Tibetans. Both the religions have their followers among the Newar community. Besides the above mentioned religions, there are minority communities like the Muslims and Christians. Muslims are concentrated in West Nepal, Terai lowlands and Kathmandu. The Christians, much less in number, in East Nepal. Lastly, are the followers of shamanism (for example the Kulung Rai) and animism.

Ethnic groups

Most of the Hindus are to be found among the Indo-Aryan ethnic group, which comprises Brahmins, Chetris, Thakuris and who live in most parts of the country. The people of other castes generally inhabit the Terai lowlands. Quite recently however, even the Magars belonging to the Tibeto-Mongoloid stock have become Hinduized. In this process of proselytization they have exhibited a growing affinity with the Thakalis, who also had become Hinduized, though at a different time and for different reason. Majority of the Tibeto-Mongoloids among others include the Rais, Limbus, Gurungs, Tamangs, Sherpas, Lepchas and the like.

There is also a third indigenous group, apart from the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Mongoloid ethnic group, which refers to the Tharus, Chepangs, Rautes, Danwars, Dhimals, and who have their own distinct set of sacred beliefs. They are termed 'indigenous' because they are thought aboriginal and because they form a group of 'broken tribes'.

The physical contrasts between the people of these different groups are marked. But, there are also considerable social and economic differences amongst the people of the same group. For example among the Paschima Brahmins (those who originally came from the West) and the Purbiya Brahmins (also originally from the west and who later settled in the east of Nepal). They both share common position in the caste hierarchy, but have distinctly separate customs and traditions as may be seen in marriage and other rituals. Different groups, however, are known to share common religious beliefs, and patterns of social organisation, let alone language.

Language groups

Nepali language has become the most effective and popular means of communication between people of different religions and language groups. Over sixty percent speak it as their mother tongue, with the percentage incereasing every year, and over nintey percent understand it. The remaining forty percent have as mother-tongues Hindi, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Tamang, Rai, Newari, Limbu, Maithili, Tharu or Gurung.

In addition to the eleven major languages, there are around forty varieties of dialects. Some of the tribal or ethnic groups may speak the same language, but with its variants, typical features of pronunciation, nuances of colloquial terms and usages of their own. The cases in point are the Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, and Tamang languages.

A consequence of the plurality of culture is clearly manifest in the plurality of forms of culture-dance, music,folk-songs,art and architecture, political ideology, styles of dress, personality traits. It is this very cultural pluralism which has infused Nepali society with a dynamism, enriched its history and provided the infrastructure for its development. However, lack of knowledge of many of the cultural forms, the absence of any articulation of the grievances of yet other culture groups which may also be a numerical minority, have posed serious problems for the prospects of cultural pluralism.

Problems and prospects of cultural pluralism's preservation

Undeniably the plurality of cultures has given Nepalese society a vital and vibrant character. With the process of development, however, this cultural heritage is getting lost.

The increasing incidences of Hinduization that are evident among the tribal and other non-Hindu groups have followed fast upon the improvements in transportation and communication facilities. These improvements have become a major source of entry for new values, beliefs and customs. The influence of tourism in different parts of Nepal and the subsequent transformation on the socio-economic and cultural systems is a case in point.

In fact Fürer-Haimendorf had in the 1960's directed our attention to the dramatic changes occurring among the

Sherpas whose village lay in the trekking route of the foreign tourists. Enchanted by the consumer items like cameras, transistors, even sleeping bags, and by the cash earned as guides or porters for tourists, many of the Sherpa youths abandoned their traditional occupation, farming, for new ones - as guides, travel or contact persons, porters and small hoteliers catering to the tourist trade. Yet this change was not undesirable insofar it warded off the impending crise induced by declining agricultural productivity, population pressure on land and increasing food scarcity in those very Sherpa villages.

For many other people whose villages did not lay in the trekking routes and who faced similiar economic problems, migration was the only available solution. As migrants, many adopt new lifestyles, values, even language different from their mother-tongue. For many migrants this transition was painful. Furthermore new occupation may have precluded taking frequent trips back home. The professional imperatives may also have had demanded a change in behaviour patterns, style of dress, residential pattern and manner of social interaction with other fellow-workers. Thus a Thakali may have had to wear dresses different from his traditional one. As individual from a joint family may have to live in a nuclear family in city where neighbours do not even know each other's name. Little by little, the traditional lifestyle gives way to a new one. Thus, with the death of the elders, the last preservers of the cultural heritage die out. However, these migrants share common tradition with other migrants, and so the evolution of a "new culture" commences.

The process of "de-traditionalization" is at time spurred on by the changes brought about through 'education'. For many people, the medium of instruction may be a language different from their mother-tongue. The problem becomes acute for those whose native language or dialect has no writting script. Many people, not surprisingly, do not know how to read and write in their mother-tongue let alone speak fluently. After migration to a new place, the migrant if young has to face another threat of 'de-traditionalization', that of miscegnation. Such 'alienation' from the original culture of the migrant's is not unique to Nepal only. Instances of the youths of Tonga Islands, of the Tasmian Islands belonging to the Maori tribe, of the Red Indian tribes, and many more, opting for the 'urban culture' and or the mainstseam culture are well documented facts.

At times however, having to adapt to the mainstream culture is resented by people, especially if their culture identity is threatened. Such is the case of the Tamangs, who have demanded recognition of their culture as a distinct and separate one. This demands have, ironically, been most articulate and vocal after the advent of Democracy and the passing of the new Constitution in 1990. On the one hand, acquiescence on the part of the government to these demands is made difficult by the fact that such a process would perhaps unleash many others with the same attitude and would given a challenge to national solidarity. Yet the demands are justified on the grounds that in the absence of timely financial as well as moral assistance from the government, preservation of valuable cultural artifacts as scrolls, folk-songs, manuscripts, may be impossible. These demands are also in keeping with the letter and spirit of the new Constitution which strongly laid emphasis on fostering harmonious social relations between different ethnic and linguistic groups of the nation and enhances the preservation of each group's culture and traditions for 'consolidating national harmony and unity' (part 4, section 24 (2) of the new Constitution).

At the same time, sacrifices have had to be made and certain cultural traditions have died out in face of new socio-economic changes and the adjustments demanded by them. Resisting change may in this case, equally imply extinction, particulary if the traditional lifestyle is no longer viable.

The Gaines, also pedantically called 'Gandharvas', support the above case. Another example is provided by the 'honey-hunters' of highland Nepal. The former used to be paid by the village headman in cash or kind to sing folk ballads or families panegyric. With the headmanship gradually declining in socio-economic prestige, the Gaines source of income too dried out. Unskilled in any other occupation, and once so many in number and such an integral part of village Nepal, the Gaines are now a dying stock.

A major obstacle for the preservation of different culture forms is thus provided by its incompatibility to survive in the modern context. Another impediment is the demands of the new urban lifestyle. Ironically, it is the more and better educated urban people who express difficultly to preserve their tradition having beeing socialized with a different sociocultural milieu. It is thus the villagers who are the true preservers of cultural identity and traditions.

The question here is, how are the diversity of cultural forms to be preserved ? Linked with this are the questions, what is to be preserved, till when and lastly by whom ? Shall we select certain enduring culture traits, as monuments, temples, painting, or endearing ones ? Should we, the general public, decide on the items or should the native folks choose what they would prefer to preserve. As mentioned earlier, in a dynamic society, culture too changes in relation to the demands placed by the people. Following this functionalist line of thought, how is it possible to determine which culture forms are likely to be functional for posterity ?

Equally pressing in the problem of identifying "priority groups" whose culture is in danger of becoming extinct. This requires extensive as well as detailed information on each culture groups of each area of Nepal. Sadly our country lacks such a systematic information. Thus we may not even know which cultural traits have been irrevocably lost in the passage of time.

Moreover, apart from groups whose culture is in danger of being extinct, there are items of material culture, as monuments, which are in critical condition and which require immediate attention. However, their restoration is difficult as it require massive financial investment, which the government, dogged as it is by chronic problems of proverty, over-population, stagnation economy and piling debts, is unable to provide. In this context, international assistance from the governments of Austria, France, Germany, Japan, international organisations as World Heritage Community, UNESCO, UNDP, (to list a few) have proved to be of invaluable significance.

It is, however, a fact that financial provision alone will not ensure preservation in the long term. There needs to be a revitalization of moral support from the local community, and foreign tourists. Consequently, repeated investments on the maintenance of artifacts of culture groups is a waste of time, effort and money unless the native population can share a responsibility in it.

For mobilizing public support, interest of the local people needs to be kindled. For this purpose, the preserved sites can turned into 'tourist spots' with certain basic infrastructural facilities as accessibility, eating spots, communication linkages with other parts of the region and perhaps even guides to provide information to the tourists. It is possible that such a step would help the people appreciate the country's cultural diversity, and thus contribute to the promotion of national harmony based on the understanding so gained. Secondly, if a nominal fee, including a guide's service is imposed on the sightseeing tours, it could help create a fund for future programs and create 'jobs' as guides.

Often however, such programs and projects have had patronage limited to the financial elites who are a numerical minority and the tourists who return to their country. This implies, the 'general public' is quite in the dark about it, and cannot participate to this endeavour.

As distressing as the general public's ingorance about its cultural heritage is the apathy of the youth towards it. Harbouring the misconception that their native culture is inferior to the modern or mainstream culture, many of the youths are extremely disinclined to support or appreciate their native culture. It is imperative to negate this 'mental' state. Disenchantment about the native culture arises on account of their non-viability and the other people's ignorance about it. This can be remedied with the publicity of the country's different folk cultures through audio-cassettes, national level seminars, culture shows, and with the support of the people themselves. Exchange programs of students from different parts of the country can also help in this objective. Encouraging production and consumption of traditional handicrafts by the local market as well as by tourists would help to keep the cultural items in existence.

Equally significant in this context is the role of foreign tourists. For many of them, the main attractions of a trip to Nepal include watching its breathtaking scenic beauty and unique folk culture. Application of the latter is sometimes recorded by them in travel guide books and research projects reports. Cultural heritage is thus preserved in the written form even if not in the oral.

The government could for purposes of collection of information about the different cultural traditions of Nepal request contributions of such written materials. Areas of popular or recurrent tourist interest could be made into 'living museums', a concept which has been used by the United States of America's government and other institutions to restore and preserve the Amish or 'cowboy settlements'. In such endeavours, the participation of the elders, women as well as the youth would be of crucial importance.

Not only "big investments" improve prospects of cultural preservation, but also 'small investments' as inclusion of a 'culture column' in the national newspapers providing forgotten details about a native culture, and students exchange program between schools of different parts of the country. Laudable contribution is being made by the national television in this regard. This hardly entails much financial investment. What is need is just a committment, a motivation.

Indeed preservation of cultural pluralism is an advantage in more ways than one - it can promote national harmony and solidarity it can generate sources of income, employment and foreign exchange as well. Care needs to be taken, however,to preserve the cultural heritage of those villages where "living museums" are to be established. Such chosen sites will probably become crowded very soon. Even if residential accomodation needs to be provided for attracting the tourists, perhaps it may be a better idea not to have the accomodation situated in proximity to the 'museum' sites. In this case prospects of preservation may be enhanced.

Conclusive evidences of successes in the national endeavour to preserve cultural pluralism will only be forthcoming after years of hard work. It may not be possible to prevent the changes that will take place in the future. Yet, a dynamism based on a strong traditional infrastructure which has served us so well till now, will certainly be as stable as anything else.

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RELIGION AND SOCIETY

THE 32 MAHARJAN TOLS OF KATHMANDU CITY

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The Farmers (Maharjan or Jyapu) of Kathmandu today constitute a group of about 2900 households (personal survey, 1991) that marry almost exclusively among themselves. They still rely heavily on agriculture work, though some of them have recently taken up other trades and a fews jobs in the bureaucracy. In 1972, the Maharjan made up 24 % of the total Newar population of the city (1). Such a proportion is less than in Bhaktapur (over 50 %) and Patan (38-40 %). However this group forms the backbone of old Kathmandu city and has played down to the present a prominent role in the religious urban life. They also contribute greatly to the overall social order. Traditionally, the Farmers of Kathmandu are always said to be divided among 32 named quarters, *tvah* in Newari, *tol* in Nepali. These *tvah* cover most of the historic core of the city and seem to be connected with an old ideal division of the town. They have in any case to be distinguished from the present division into 35 wards used for administrative purposes by the central government. These modern wards, which spead over a much greater area than the old Malla city, do not correspond at all to the 32 traditional *tvah*.

A standard list of the "32 *tvah*" has been printed by some Nepali scholars, distributing them among the three parts (upper, middle, lower) of the city (2). It is more or less relevant insofar as the names are concerned, but it wrongly mixes Maharjan and Prajapati (Potters) quarters. Now, the Potters form (at least at present) a group totally distinct from the Farmers. In our survey, we have been able to identify 28 Maharjan *tvah* - some of them having split recently - and five separate Prajapati *tvah*. In spite of this discrepancy, the old concept of "32 *tol*" is nonetheless very much alive among the Maharjan and is still used to designate the whole Farmer community of Kathmandu.

The idea of 32 *tvah* has a rich symbolic signification. In the Indian world, the number "32" summons up a wide spectrum of religious references. The outermost border of the *Vastupurusamandala*, the square on which rests the Hindu temple and the plan of all architectural forms of the Hindus, for instance is sub-divided into 32 units, each linked with a divinity. Even now, the altar built for the Fire-sacrifice by Newar Hindu and Buddhist priests is made up of 32 bricks and 32 kinds of grains are to be offered on it during ceremonies. This auspicious number is also to be founded in the thirty-two petals of the lotus of Akasa, which in architecture is the typical basis or support of a building. Similarly, the king is supposed to have 32 auspicious marks (*battislaksana*) on his body, as is the Kumari living goddess. Undoubtedly, "32" is derived from the original "4", corresponding to the four cardinal directions. It is a multiple of 4, 8, 16, all these numbers beeing used both by Hindus and Buddhists to represent the universe on a reduced scale.

When does this division originate in Kathmandu city ? Unfortunately, historical data are totally wanting to answer this question of basic importance. Some of the names of the quarters are mentioned in medieval inscriptions, but we do not actually know when the notion of "32 *tol*" was introduced in the urban settlement. The first trace of it dates only from the second half of the 19th century. It is found in Oldfield's book *Sketches from Nepal* (1880). The author, a surgeon attached to the British Residency in Kathmandu, reports that the city is said to be divided into thirty-two small squares or *tol* (p.103). What is more, he writes, "The number of gateways corresponds exactly with the number of squares (tols) within the city, each gateway being associated with a particular square, and placed under the municipal control of the same local authorities, who were as much responsible for the repair and defence of the gateway as they were for the general management of the square" (pp. 95-96). It is true that Bhaktapur's National Art Gallery contains a map of Kathmandu from the turn of the 20th century showing 33 gates instead of 32, all around the city (3). But "33" can be read as 32 (Vedic gods) + 1 (Indra, at their head). Yet, the names of the gates appearing on this map, each referring to one quarter in the city, do not correspond, or very imperfectly, to the present list of the Maharjan quarters.

Presumably, the existence of the "32 *tol*" predates the 19th century. But this is a matter of conjecture. At present, it is enough to state that this division must be posterior to the unification of the city by Ratna Malla in the 15th century. Even if it is not so old, we will see that this Indian notion is made up from archaic elements which point back to the very origin of the city.

Let us turn to the present ethnographic facts. The Farmers today use the word *tvah* in two interrelated meanings : a) a Maharjan social grouping, characterized both by a compulsory musical association called *dhimay guthi*, and by exogamy ; b) an old territorial unit, the residential quarter, which is defined by a number of sacred places and by ritual practices ; within this quarter, the Maharjan form only a part of the population and are mixed with other Newar and Parbatiya castes. The Farmers mingle the two meanings ambiguously. There is indeed some ground for confusion, since the first one also denotes a spatial unit.But, as will be shown, the social grouping *tvah* remains active even when the corresponding territory has vanished. It must be noted that non-Maharjan castes always use the word *tvah* in the second sense. That is why a Maharjan informant could report to us straightforwardly that Sresthas (the Hindu Newars traders caste) have no *tvah*.

The *tvah* as social unit

The musical association *dhimay guthi* and Nasah dyah, the god of music

In their first meaning, the 28 quarters referred to above are the major segments of the Maharjan community of Kathmandu. They constitute corporate exogamous groups, having their own identity, owning a common territory and uniting in several ritual activities. The solidarity within the group is expressed by a common name built up from the name of its corresponding quarter and the suffix *mi*, litt. "men" : e.g., Wotumi, Wanghami, etc. Most of the relationship within the Farmers of the capital rest on these quarters. Their size varies considerably : the largest (Musum Baha) is made up of 300 households, the smallest (Kusu Biyalachi) of only 25 households. The members are exclusively Maharjan.

Each of these segments forms a social unit of the *guthi* type. As it is well known, this term designates in Newari a whole variety of voluntary or compulsory associations connected with the performance of certain tasks or services which often have a religious goal or motive as their basis (4). In the present case, all the male members of the quarter, *tvahpi*, adults or considered as such, must belong to this association. The membership is hereditary and follows the agnatic line. A person will never have the opportunity to change *tvah* during his life time, and he cannot be a member of two quarters simultaneously. Within the group, the ultimate authority rests on the five seniormost men. These five eldest, *thakali*, are the key figures of the quarter and the conservators of traditional usage. They decide "what is good and what is bad".

The interesting point is that this closed association, called *tvah guthi, dhimay guthi,* or *nasah puja guthi,* is based on a cylindrical drum known in Newari by the name of *dhimay*. In Kathmandu, such drums are peculiar to the Maharjan and maintain the identity of the local segments of the Farmers caste. The *dhimay* is shaped from a section of a thick, hollowed-out tree trunk. It has two smooth heads to which no tuning paste is applied. The right head is struck with a cane stick which is rolled into a spiral at one end ; the left head is struck with the bare hand. The diameter of the heads of this instrument varies in size from 27 to 42 cm for a body length of 50 cm (5). The heads are fastened to the body with leather thongs which are laced diagonally across one another in an X-pattern. This instrument is played in pairs, almost exclusively while walking. It is always combined with the small cymbals *bhusya*. In the upper and central part of the city, it is also accompanied by a metal disc, *kepui,* struck with a wooden hammer, and in the lower part by a long (80 to 100 cm) slender trumpet called *pomgah* which needs an additional support of bamboo when played.

In the upper and central part of Kathmandu, one or several men precede the *dhimay* players carrying long bamboo poles which are decorated with colourful flags and two yak tails. These poles, called *dhunya* or *dhunya muṇya,* are swung and turned (New : *ikegu)* in time to the rhythm of the music of the ensemble which follows. They are associated with the monkey-god Hanuman and are considered to delight the different deities of the universe, especially Buddha. They are brandished only by the Maharjan and do not exist in the other Newar towns of the Valley. According to the tradition, there are 17 (or 18) *dhunya* for all Kathmandu, but each quarter of the upper part possesses at least five to ten poles.

The *dhimay* drum is supposed to be one of the oldest musical instruments of the Newars. Contrary to other membranophones, it is apparently purely local and was not brought from India. The Maharjan music teachers assert that the *dhimay* was made "during the time of the gods" and that the Kirants - one of the first mythological dynasties of Kathmandu valley - already played it to drive away tigers *(dhu kya baja)* which at that time lived in large numbers in the country. It is also assumed by the Maharjan that the melody of all Newar musical instruments derives ultimately from the *dhimay baja*, i.e., the music of *dhimay*. According to some authors, this drum dates back to the Licchavi times (5-8th centuries) (6). For them, the *dhimay* and *dhunya* pole are the remnants of ancient Newar martial traditions, "when the Jyapu, whose caste alone plays these instruments, were taken into military service together with the Nay (Butchers)" (7). "It was war music, used in battle ; the thundering drum and the crashing cymbals, heard from a distance, would suggest hundreds of people and thus served to frighten the enemy" (8). Although none of these authors gives firm historical data, there may be some basis to such tradition. The flags hung from the *dhunya* pole are for instance called *vijaya dhvaja*, "the flag of victory," and explicitly symbolize the triumph of the king against his enemies.

Before dealing with the musical activities of this association, it is necessary to introduce Nasah dyah, the Newar god of music and danse. This deity who belongs undoubtedly to the tribal heritage of the Newars, is closely linked with the *dhimay guthi*. He is the main symbolic pillar of the Maharjan quarter and is worshipped before every musical session. Nasah dyah is essentially a formless god, invisible like music. He is represented by simple holes mostly of triangular shape, in the wall of a shrine or of a private house. These holes may be single or, more often, in sets of three. Each Maharjan quarter possesses a shrine dedicated to Nasah dyah. This sanctuary, which is the ritual focus of the *tvah* group, is always located in a place difficult of access : a small, dark courtyard, a corner. It can be oriented toward different directions. Nasah dyah is nowadays identified with Nritesvar (Nataraja), the dancing Siva, but very few shrine images of him in this form exist in Kathmandu (9).

The members (New : *guthiyar*) of the association gather regularly to worship Nasah dyah and to demonstrate their unity. The meetings generally take place twice a year : on the nine day of Dasain festival (New : *Mahani*) and during winter, either in Magh (January-February), or in Phagun (February-March), a Thursday or a Sunday - two days associated with the god of music. On both occasions, an animal (buffalo, goat or chicken) is sacrificed to Nasah dyah and blood is offered to him *(nasah puja)*. The buffalo-horns are often hung from the shrine to please the deity and to commemorate the event. All the members of the quarter must attend the feast which follows the sacrifice, even if they have moved their residence to another quarter or to newer part of city. They can be fined if they are not present. The expenses of the feast are financed by fixed contributions.

The *dhimay* drums, *bhusya* cymbals, and sometimes metal discs, *pomgah* trumpets and *dhunya* poles are kept within a special house called *akhah chẽ* (New.) located in the precinct of the *tvah*. This music house belongs to a man, the *kaji*, who is in charge of the musical instrument as well as the annual feasts of the association. This person also keeps the group records. His function is handed down from father to son. The *kaji* enjoys a great prestige in the association and is exempted from paying contributions. The drums (between four and ten) are hung from the wall of the largest room of the house, near a small altar dedicated to Nasah dyah. They are worshipped daily and receive blood every time a sacrifice is offered to Nasah dyah. The *dhimay* drums are indeed cult objects : they are said to be embodiments of the god of music. They are even thought to be one of the lineage deities, *kul*, of the quarter.

The *dhimay* drums occupy a prominent position in most religious processions. They are taken out from the *akhah chẽ* and played in the streets of Kathmandu (and even beyond) several times a year. During the annual sacrifice to the local Nasah dyah, and domestic ceremonies such as *ihi* mock-marriage of young girls or old-age consecration *(janku)*, they are played only in the *tvah* territorial area. But for important urban rituals such as : Pahan cahre (March-April), Seto Matsyendranath jatra (April), Gu punhi (full moon of Saun, July-August), Pacali Bhairava jatra (September-October) and Siga punhi (full moon of Kartik, October-November), they visit other parts of the old town, accompanying processions of deities. During the Indra jatra festival (August-September), the group of *dhimay* players even have to circumambulate the whole historic center of Kathmandu. In addition, the government invites these musicians on official occasions such as the marriage of the crown prince, a coronation, or the visit of a foreign President or Prime Minister. It must be said however that in some quarters (e. g. : Musum Baha), the *mu dhimay*, i.e. the oldest and the most revered drum of the house of music, is not allowed to cross the boundaries of the neighbourhood : it may just proceeds towards the local Nasah dyah shrine and then has to come back directly to the *akhah chẽ*.

The learning of music and the ritual of initiation into the *tvah* group

Dhimay drum apprenticeship plays a vital role in the life of the Maharjan quarter. It occurs every twelve years and concerns all the young Farmer boys of the group from the ages of 9 or 10 to 22 or 23. It is preceded by a collective initiation, called *vahlah conegu*, during which the young boys spend two days and a night in a shrine located, with one exception, beyond the old boundaries of Kathmandu. Depending on the quarter to which they are attached, the initiates go to Bhadrakali, Pacali Bhairava, Indrayani, Svayambhu, Maiti Devi or Kathe Simbhu (=Siga). The ceremony is repeated for three years. The third year (New : *vahlah dhunkeku)*, a Vajracarya Buddhist priest conducts a fire sacrifice *homa* in the deity temple and places a red and yellow *tika* mark on the forehead of all the young boys. The *vahlah conegu* is organized on the basis of the quarter and is held at fixed dates of the religious calendar. In Bhadrakali's shrine, the initiation takes place a day before Ghode jatra (March-April), in Pacali Bhairava it occurs during Dasain (September-October), in Svayambhu and in Siga on the Kati punhi day (October-November), in Maiti Devi the day of the Laksmi puja (October-November), and in Indrayani on Bal cahre (November-December).

The tuition session (New : *dhimay senegu)* can then start. It lasts for a period of about three months, covering the greater part of the rainy season. During the first part of the instruction, the young boys gather every evening in the *akhah chẽ*. Learning is by rote and makes use of drum syllables, i.e., each type of stroke has a proper name which has to be memorized. The drum syllables are chanted in the appropriate rhythm by the teacher and copied by the pupil. Then the teacher plays the composition, and the pupil tries to follow (10). During the second half of the session, the boys also join together in the morning to learn how to wield the *dhunya* pole and to be trained in some acrobatic postures (of which there are twelve). The tuition being compulsory, all the men belonging to the Maharjan *tvah* know, at least roughly, how to play the *dhimay* drum and to work the *dhunya* pole. A Farmer will be introduced into the *dhimay* guthi of his father only after the completion of the session. This admission is of the utmost importance, for membership in the musical association is regarded as the ultimate criterion for rightly claiming membership in the Maharjan quarter group.

The acrobatic and musical apprenticeship goes along with a number of religious ceremonies and offerings to Nasah dyah. The sound of *dhimay, dhimay baja,* is thought to be derived from the mouth of the god of music himself. That is why its music is not allowed to be written down, assert the gurus. In fact, from the religious point of view, the teacher's efficacy is limited : it is Nasah dyah who ultimately inspires the acrobats and musicians. The artists derive their ability and their talent directly from him. The preliminary rite, called *kisli tayegu* (New.), is performed on either a Thursday or a Sunday. Its main purpose is to transfer the divine energy of Nasah dyah from his main shrine in the quarter to the small altar located in the practicing room of the *akhah chẽ*. To this end, the music teachers offer to Nasah dyah a small clay cup of uncooked rice with one betel nut and a coin on top of it. They touch the holes representing the god with this cup (New. : *kisli)* and bring it back to the *akhah chẽ*. The students, for their part, must bow down in front of Nasah dyah and offer him a chicken.

Twenty days after this preliminary ritual, the teachers perform a *chema puja* in front of Nasah dyah's shrine. It is a pacification ceremony which establishes an adequate relationship between the worshipper and the divinity.

Twenty more days pass and the teachers conduct another rite called *bah puja* in homage to the god of music. This ceremony marks the beginning of the acrobatic and *dhunya* training. The course is completed by a final ritual called *dhimay pidanegu*, during which the students spend a whole night in the *akhah chẽ* or in the local shrine of Nasah dyah and then sacrifice a goat (or a chicken) to the god of music. Interestingly, this animal has to be stolen by the students sometime during the preceding day. It is said that Nasah dyah will favour his larcenous devotees and may hit those who try to bother them. After the sacrifice, the teachers distribute red and yellow *tika* marks to all their students and relatives. It is believed that Nasah dyah manifests himself personally to the students at the time of this ritual, either by possessing them or by sudden flashes in the lamps which are lit around his shrine.

During the following days or weeks, the teachers and their students visit in procession many temples of Kathmandu or its environs, playing *dhimay*. Until now, the newly initiated members of the quarter played this drum only in the practicing room of the music house. Once the *pidanegu puja* has been completed, they are sufficiently well-trained to perform in public and to play in the streets of the town. In Musum Baha, a quarter belonging to the lower part of Kathmandu, this event is marked ceremonially the next day of *pidanegu* itself. The musical troupe led by *pomgah* trumpets, has to pay a visit to the descendants of the Malla royal family (Thakujuju) of Bhimsenthan and then proceeds towards the Nasah dyah shrine of Hanuman Dhoka, the former royal palace (Nasal chok), where offerings are made. On the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Asvin (September-October), most of the *dhimay guthi* of Kathmandu send their musical ensembles to the shrine of Pacali Bhairava. Four days later, on the eve of Vijayadasami, the groups of musicians visit the three-story temple of the goddess Taleju, the former royal divinity, in the heart of the city. The next day, some *dhimay* associations go to Pasupatinath and Guhyesvari. About a month later, at the full moon of Kartik (October-November), the groups pay a visit to Svayambhu, the most sacred place of Newar Mahayanism.

It is clear from these ethnographic observations that music and acrobatics play a most active role in the socialization of the young Maharjan boys. A Farmer will be integrated into his basic group, the *tvah*, only after completing the *vahlah conegu* initiation and the apprenticeship of *dhimay*. Once these ceremonies have been performed, he must observe all caste restrictions on pain of losing his own caste status. He has to refrain from eating pork and he must take only pure food from people of castes higher than his. He may not take water from or allow himself to be touched by untouchable castes or menstruating women. In other words, he becomes a full member of his caste, ritually and morally responsible for his own actions.

This drum is thus an essential element in promoting solidarity within the quarter and in maintaining the distinctiveness of the Maharjan community. In the colloquial language, *dhimay* is even used as a synonymous term for the Farmer's caste (11). But there is more : the structure of the Maharjan quarters of Kathmandu mirrors that of the *dhimay guthi* groups. Here music is obviously an organizational principle of society and residence. It is an integral part of the basic Maharjan network of social ties and of their reproduction. Without *dhimay*, the local quarter group cannot exist and cannot claim to exist. This drum represents, identifies and unifies the social group. As a cult object attached to men, it also emphasizes the antiquity of the musical association : as noted, it is a figure of ancestrality.

Oddly enough, this pattern is confined to Kathmandu. Although music plays a prominent role in all Newar settlements and is closely related to social or religious activities among every Newar caste, it supports the whole social structure only in the present day capital of Nepal. In Bhaktapur and Patan, the Farmers do possess *dhimay* drums, but the associations in charge of these instruments, *dhimay khala* or *dhimay manka*, are open to other castes or do not command the territorial division of the city as in Kathmandu (12). In these two other urban settlements, the *dhimay* groups do not function as *guthi* and their membership remains optional : a man will always have the possibility of changing his affiliation from one association to another.

Kinship and marriage

The *tvah* social grouping is neither a lineage nor a clan. Its members are not able to trace kin links among themselves in the direct line, and they do not see themselves as having all descended from a common male ancestor. They are divided into several unnamed patrilineages (New : *kavā*) characterized by their shallowness. A lineage generally encompasses from four to twelve households that are separated but still live near each other. Among these kinsmen, the Maharjan distinguish two degrees of agnatic links : 1) - up to the third generation, the close agnates, *phuki* ; 2) - from the fourth up to the fifth generation, the distant agnates, *jhinu*. As a rule, a lineage includes all the *phuki* kinsmen and some *jhinu*. After six generations, and sometimes even before, the memory of the genealogical links vanishes and the group splits up. Quarrels and migrations contribute to the process of fragmentation whereby a single lineage group splinters into new autonomous *kavā*. This corresponds more or less to the matrimonial prohibitions. Ideally, it is not permissible to marry in the paternal line within seven generations and in the maternal line within three. In practice some marriages do occur with closer relatives if there is a "good reason" for the alliance in question, but such cases are exceptional since most of the kinsmen, whether close or distant, belong to the same exogamous *tvah*.

These kinship units are mainly ritual units. The agnatic kinsmen have first of all to observe birth and death pollution rules for each other. Let us consider for instance death, which entails numerous prescriptions. All the kinsmen of the patriline must participate in the funeral procession towards the cremation ground (New : *sana vanigu*) and mourn (New : *dukha conegu)* for at least twelve days. Accordingly, they have to wear a white cap and non-leather shoes. They also have to abstain from eating meat in their house but surprisingly enough, they are allowed to take meat outside their house and to join festive meals if they are invited. Whereas the *jhinu* respect these prohibitions for twelve days, that is untill the *ghahsu* funeral ceremony, the *phuki* will remain polluted for forty-five days. The closest relatives of the dead person, for their part, remain impure for a whole year.

Yet the main way in which the lineage expresses its unity is through its deity cult. Each *kavā* possesses its own deity, Digu dyah, which is represented by natural uncarved stones. These stones are located outside of the old town wall boundaries, on a meadow. They are worshipped once a year in Baisakh (April-Mai), sometimes twice a year : in Baisakh and in Bhadau (August-September), at the time of the festival of Indra. In the case of segmentation within the lineage, the newly formed kin-groups will still propitiate the same sacred stones, in the same spot, but they will go at different times. They have become *ba-phuki*, "split-agnates" : although sharing a common ancestral deity, they no longer form a ritual unit and do not share the birth and death pollution of the other split-off group. As a rule, a quarter includes different open places for their lineages deities. Notably enough, these lithic Digu dyah are not rereved the rest of the year. Yet, some kinship groups also have iconic representations of the lineage deity which are worshipped daily by their caretakers. Such statues are stored either turn by turn among the kinsmen or in the *thakali's* house. They are carried in procession to the relevant open altar of Digu dyah, outside the city, during the annual worship of the deity. The two forms, iconic and aniconic, refer to the same god - whose name, most of the time, is kept secret.

Although they do not form a kin-group, the members of a *tvah* regard themselves as vaguely consanguineous. They consider each other to be *daju-bhai*, "elder brother-younger brother". "To be affiliated with the same quarter, a Maharjan told us, is equivalent to belonging to the same family" *(parivar)*. The *dhimay* drums, which are worshipped as one of the lineage deities of the group, reinforce this feeling. The *tvah* possibly originates from an old original kinship unit of which the ancient lineal ties have been lost through the centuries. But, more probably, territoriality (attachment to a given place) and consanguinity played an equal role in the making of such groupings. As in other parts of the world, common residence has here created fictive kinship links. However that may be, the Maharjan *tvah* is rigorously exogamous. Marriage within the quarter social grouping is forbidden. If somebody breaks this rule, he will be expelled from his *tvah* as well as from his lineage. Exogamy also concerns the families who have moved from their original ancestral neighbourhood. A Maharjan will remain a Wotumi, a Wanghami - from the name of his quarter - being still bound by the rules of his group, even if he has settled beyond the old town. To sum up, the quarter is a social unit which remains active and corporate even if the residential links disappear or splinter after a migration. On the other hand, a Farmer can marry a

Maharjan girl living in the same quarter as him if she does not belong to the same original *tvah*.

As previously indicated, the Maharjan of Kathmandu marry mainly among themselves. They are extremely reluctant to contract a marriage with Farmers from rural areas and other Newar towns. As one informant pointed out, "We all belong to the same caste, but our customs are too different". In fact, the Maharjan of the capital feel themselves to be superior to all other Farmers. To marry a girl from outside will entail a loss of reputation, *ijjat*, within the community. It must be said that this group has developed a very sophisticated and urbanized way of life as compared with the Maharjan of Bhaktapur and Patan whose manners remain more rustic. Furthermore, in contrast with village Farmers, intermarriages with Srestha Traders are very rare. However rich he may be, the Maharjan of Kathmandu takes great pride in being a Farmer and displays a strong attachement to his caste. To become Srestha through an upward intercaste alliance is alien to his way of thinking.

Segmentation and peculiar cases

To turn back to the territorial organization, some *dhimay* musical grouping have split up during the last three decades on account of internal quarrels. Three cases may be mentioned : Tha Bahi (=Thamel), Naypaco-Phasigã and Bhindyah (=Bhimsenthan). In Tha Bahi, the division goes back to the early seventies. It was due to a marriage between two members of the *tvah*. A small group of the association stood up for the couple and refused the excommunication pronounced by the Elders. This minority seceded and established its own *guthi*. Accordingly, the quarter today includes two *dhimay* musical associations, each one possessing its own music house. However, the two groups still worship the same Nasah dyah shrine. Though the Maharjan of Tha Bahi nowadays consider that their locality is made up of two different *tvah*, the two groups do not intermarry. In Naypaco-Phasigã, the segmentation evolved in two stages. The Maharjan of Phasigã first separated from Naypaco and then divided one more time among themselves. The present three offshoot *dhimay guthi* are totally independent for ritual purposes. Yet, as in the previous instance, they still forbid their members to marry each other.

Asã, one of the most important and ancient crossroads of Kathmandu, presents another picture. This *tvah* split up long time ago into two units : Bhotahity Kisani and Kamalachi Pilatu (=Konay tvah), corresponding to two well-demarcated kinship groups. Only the first one possesses a *dhimay guthi*. The two groups worship the god of music separately, at two different cult-sites. However, they exchange their musical ensembles during the various religious festivals and walk in procession behind the same *dhunya* bamboo pole. Traditionally, marriages between the two groups were prohibited, but some years ago Bhotahity Kisani and Kamalachi Pilatu started intermarrying. The small size of the associations (17 and 18 members respectively) undoubtedly explains this peculiar situation.

In spite of the modernization which is rapidly transforming the urban landscape, and notwithstanding the growing fashion for new types of music, Western or Indian, among the younger generation, the traditional music groups are still very active and continue to exert social control over their members. The Maharjan of Kathmandu are still attached to these old structures, presumably because they help maintain their identity in an urban, developing world. However, in Duga Bahi, a *tvah* located near the building of the Royal Nepal Airline Corporation, the *dhimay* association disappeared in the early eighties. Although the rule of exogamy is still in force, the quarter group has lost its emblematic drums. The

Nasah dyah shrine is nowadays deserted and the *akhah chẽ* has been sold to an outsider. Such cultural losses are likely to occur in other neighbourhoods. The accelerated urban expansion of Kathmandu is a serious threat for the socio-religious framework of the whole city.

The *tvah* as spatial unit

We estimate that the total population of Maharjan in Kathmandu is about 20.000 persons (5 % of the total inhabitants of the capital). These Farmers primarily inhabit the old Newar town, and are mainly located in the south (13). It is in this part that the most important concentration of Maharjan's population is found (see map n° 1), and that the social and spatial structures of the *tvah* are still in harmony.

This is the case in Musum Baha. Although constant arrivals and departures, most of the members of the 300 households still live here.But whether these people go to another part of Kathmandu or not, the social rules are still alive. Even migrants remain affiliated, as we have seen before, with their original *tvah*, especially to the Nasah *guthi*. These communal ties linking a man with his original quarter points to the notion of territory. People belonging to other castes also come to settle in this quarter. Looking at these changes in population, one is prompted to ask : what remains of the territory which no longer shelters its primeval population ? Before trying to answer this question, we shall define the spatial unit itself : what is a *tvah* in Kathmandu ?

To answer this question, we shall identify the elements invariably existing in all *tvah*. We shall see next how the Maharjan themselves define the boundaries of the *tvah*. Then, on a smaller scale, we shall focus on the repartition of these quarters in the town. Last, we shall study the role of the Maharjan in the urban milieu.

The determinant elements of the *tvah.*

The *tvah* in Kathmandu can be defined by several elements which are found in all of them. In particular, these elements are temples and divinities who are worshipped daily or occasionally by the population of the quarter.

• As shown above, *the shrine of Nasah dyah,* the divinity of music, is linked with the Nasah *guthi*. Nasah's shrines are often situated in places which are difficult to find, like courtyards or back alleys. In each *tvah* there is one shrine of Nasah dyah, with two exceptions :

- Phasigã, a *tvah* located in the southern part of Kathmandu, does not have a Nasah dyah of its own. The Maharjan population of this *tvah* worship the Nasah dyah of Naypaco, a neighbouring *tvah*. But, twenty years ago Naypaco and Phasigã were just one. Nowadays, even though they have split into two *tvah*, they share the same shrine of Nasah dyah.

- Wanghah (Indrachok) has three shrines of Nasah, one for each musical group *(dhimay, dapha* (14), *pomgah).*

All the other *tvah* possess only one Nasah dyah. *Pujas* for worshipping this divinity do not take place very often (only two or three times a year), but the whole population of the *tvah* gather on these occasions. It is not necessary to increase the number of shrines, since the people only visit them occasionally.

• *The temple of Gane dyah* . Ganesh also receives the offerings of the population living in one *tvah*. Unlike Nasah dyah, Ganesh is worshipped every morning. Most of the time, there are several temples of Ganesh in each *tvah*, but one is always more important than the others. This is called *Tvah Gane dyah*, the Ganesh of the *tvah*. For some reasons of convenience, the whole population of one *tvah* does not go to the *Tvah Gane Dyah* every morning. But, on *Ganesh Jatra*, everybody worships *Tvah Gane dyah*.

These two divinities, Gane and Nasah dyah, are the most significant for the *tvah* (see map n° 2).

- *The place of Chvasa dyah*. This divinity has no temple. Instead, it is often represented by a hole in public places like streets or crossroads. The people of the *tvah* put, for example, the clothes of dead people at this very place. Unlike Nasah or Ganesh temples, there can be two Chvasa of equal importance if the *tvah* is very big.

- *The place of Kolã dyah*. This is the place where people used to throw the remains of funeral meals. Like Chvasa dyah, this divinity has no temple or iconic form.

- *The place of Luku Maha dyah*. Luku Maha dyah is a protector divinity symbolized by sunken stones. Sometimes these stones are located more than one meter under the street, like at Ombahal. They are excavated during *Ghode Jatra* to allow people to deposit offerings. Like Chvasa dyah, there is at least one Luku Maha dyah in each *tvah*, but if the *tvah* is large, it can possess several.

- *Akhah chẽ*. The last important place for the *tvah* is the house *(akhah chẽ)* where the *dhimay* are kept when they are not used. Usually there are two *akhah chẽ* in one *tvah* (one for *dhimay*, one for *dapha*), and the *akhah chẽ* of *dhimay* cannot be moved. This house plays an important role during the acrobatic and musical apprenticeship.

These elements are constant from one *tvah* to another. Sometimes there are exceptions but the reasons for them have been forgotten.

To be identified as a *tvah* by the Maharjan, the quarter must have the above mentioned different shrines or sacred places. The concentration of religious monuments gives a very important symbolic charge to this territorial unit.

After identifying common elements, we tried to define the boundaries of the *tvah* with the help of the Farmers.

Urban reference marks used by the Maharjan to define their quarter.

The urban marks (15) used as boundaries by the Maharjan can be divided into 4 classes :

- *Names of quarters :* 41.
- *Names of temples :* 30 *or of bahal :* 11. Five names of *tvah* are also names of *bahal* (16).
- *Names of other urban marks :* 13. Those are mostly buildings with public functions, but the Vishnumati River also falls into this category.
- *Names of main roads:* 20. Seven of them are described by one of the places to which they lead. Five of these places are religious.

• *Names of quarters.*

A third of the answers are names of neighbouring quarters. Perhaps this is the result of the survey itself : the topic was quarters and the easiest way to locate one's own is in relation to another. 24 of the 41 names of quarters are other Maharjan *tvah*. The Farmers of the southern part of Kathmandu seem to

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डिल्ली रमण रेग्मी
ल्याणी रेग्मी स्मा
पुस्तकाल

use this traditional division almost exclusively, but in the upper part of the town, the references vary much more : half of the names used are not Maharjan *tvah*.

To define a quarter with regard to a neighbouring one gives us a vague idea of its location but not of its extent or boundaries. The information is not precise but maybe it corresponds with the feeling Maharjan have for their quarters. It is difficult to discuss this notion at the present stage of the study.

- ***Names of temples and bahal.***

This category represents a third of the answers. It seems as important for the Maharjan to locate themselves with regard to the divinities as with regard to human beings. This category includes names of precise places which allow us to know, from the Maharjan point of view, how far the *tvah* extends. This kind of boundary is not a linear one, but rather a bounding landmark which is sometimes far from the places people live. We have no information about how one landmark is linked to another. They are linked to residences by religious observances. More than boundaries, this category seems to give us ends of routes.

These reference marks give us a new vision of the *tvah*. It is not only a compact area surrounded by other quarters or *tvah*. Nor it is just where the Maharjan live. Some religious places which are more or less far from where the population lives, are essential. The *tvah* becomes bigger, stretched in one direction or another by these religious buildings. Although the answers of this category are very different than the answers of the first one, they are not in opposition. In fact they complement each other. The Maharjan *tvah* is defined by human marks (the places where men live), and sacred marks (the places where human are connected with the divinities). Some of these divine references are located on the fringe of the *tvah*.

- ***The other urban marks.***

The marks belonging to this third category are not religious references. They are new buildings (between one hundred and 150 years old) and are used either because they are prominent in the landscape or well known. Examples include Durbar School, Bir Hospital, the R.N.A.C. Building and the National Theater. All these marks are in the upper part of town.

The Vishnumati River, which borders Kathmandu on the west, and the former royal palace (Basantapur/Hanuman Dhoka) can also be included in this category. When an urban mark without religious character was used by the Maharjan of the southern part of the town to delimit their *tvah*, it was one of these two marks. These two are remarkable points of the city of Kathmandu already: the Vishnumati was the western extremity of the city and Hanuman Dhoka was the heart.

As with the names of quarters, attachment to traditional marks is again more evident in the southern part of Kathmandu than in the northern one. In the south, urban marks do not change ; only few transformations are visible in the landscape.

- *Main roads and alleys.*

This category includes two types of roads : the main roads, which give Kathmandu its main directions, and alleys, which the Maharjan speak of in a different manner.

The main roads (New Road, Kalimati Road, Kantipath, etc.) change their function when we change our scale. At the town scale, they link distant places, but at the scale of the quarter, they become divisive elements. They are too large compared to the size of the quarter. They become real limits and as such cannot belong to one *tvah*.

Alleys, which do not always have precise names, are identified by one of the places which they lead to, most of the time, a religious place (17). The Farmers do not speak about a temple itself, but about the road which leads to it ; for example, the *gali* (18) which leads to the Nasah dyah's shrine. The importance of these streets is not in their size but in the symbolism with which they are charged. Unlike the main roads, their role is to link elements belonging to the same quarter. They are the ties between the places the Maharjan live and the religious landmarks we mentioned earlier.

This category of linear marks again is marked by a difference in the traditionalism of the upper and the lower parts of Kathmandu. All but one of the roads that the Maharjan of the southern part mentioned, (and they are very few), belong to the second type. (The main road from Tripureswar to Kalimati is the only exception). Generally speaking, roads are not used by the Farmers to delimit their territory. They were given as only 20 marks of 120. This leads us to believe that the *tvah* is not well defined in space. If a rigorous demarcation does exist, it does not seem important to the Maharjan.

The analysis of these boundaries or urban marks throws a light on the way the Maharjan visualize their territory. In our present state of knowledge, we can say that the notion of *tvah* for the Maharjan seems to be more a question of perception than a question of space clearly defined. The

Maharjan *tvah* consists of a place of residence where houses often center around one or several courtyards called *nani*, of temples located in this area or next to it, and of roads of different sizes usually leading to these places of worship. The name of the quarter is known outside the quarter, but this does not mean that the boundaries are more precise.

In the above paragraphs, we maintain that there is a difference between the southern (lower) and the northern (upper) parts of Kathmandu. We will now turn to this partition of the town.

Repartition of the "32 tols" in Kathmandu

- ***Upper part, Lower part, Central part***

In the lists published by Nepali authors, the 32 Maharjan *tols* are divided into three parts :

-> The upper part : *Thahne*
-> The middle part : *Dathu*
-> The lower part : *Kone*

In the list of R. K. Vajracharya (19), the *tvah* are distributed in the following way :

-> 9 *tvah* in *Thahne*
-> 11 *tvah* in *Dathu*
-> 12 *tvah* in *Kone*

Some reasons prevent us from adopting this classification :

- First, the list of R. K. Vajracharya and our recently established list do not correspond. As we have seen above, some changes have occured.

- Second, it seems that nowadays,for most people, the middle part of the town is not very significant. In fact, only the Maharjan of Maru state that they belong to *Dathu*. How then can we distribute the ten other *tvah* of *Dathu* between the northern and the southern parts of the city ? For this we have some criteria to help us.

- The boundary which separates the upper and the lower part of Kathmandu passes between the two lions standing in front of Taleju's temple at Hanuman Dhoka and then follows New Road.

- For some people, this boundary is connected with the *masan* (the place where the dead persons are burnt). The Maharjan of the lower part use Teku as their cremation ground and the ones of the upper part mostly Luti Ajima. Only four *tvah*: Maru, Yatakha, Makhā and Maga, are not concerned with these two *masan* (see map n° 3).

- The third criterion is the tutelary divinity of the *tvah*. For the most part, the *tvah* of *Thahne* worship *Ajima* or some *Aju* and the *tvah* of *Kone* worship Pacali Bhairav.

- The last criterion used for this partition is possessing *dhunya* or not. All the *tvah* of *Thahne* have a *dhunya* except Walachi which does not because of its divinity Narsing (20) ; none of the *tvah* of the lower part have this pole.

If we try to organize our list of *tvah* according to these criteria, we face the following problems :

The Farmers of **Ombahal** say that they belong to *Kone* (south). This *tvah* in fact is located south of New Road and Taleju's temple. Their cremations do take place in Teku and their divinity is Pacali. However, they have *dhunya*, like *tvah* in the northern part.

The Maharjan of **Pukhudyā** possess their own divinity, Bhadrakali, and *dhunya*, and report that they belong to *Thahne*. But the cremation ground of the Farmers of this *tvah* is in Teku and they are located south of New Road. These last two points associate Pukhudyā with the lower part of the town. **Kohiti** is a *tvah* which belongs to the southern part of Kathmandu, but it has its own divinity, Nìl Varahi.

Using the above criteria, the list of 28 *tvah* we have established can be distributed as follows (The exceptional cases itemized above are categorized according to what the Farmers reported) [see table 1 & 2 and map n° 2] :

Thahne : Asan, Chwasalubi, Dugā Bahi, Jamo, Kilaga, Kusu Biyalachi, Kwa Baha, Maga, Mahabauddha, Makhā, Nyeta, Pukudyā, Tha Bahi, Tyauda, Waghah, Walachi, Wotu, Yatakha.

Dathu : Maru.

Kone : Bakachẽ, Bhindyah, Kohiti, Musum Baha, Naypaco, Om Baha, Tokā Baha, Yangal, Yutu Nani.

The stronger unity of the southern *tvah* is illustrated by the fact that the *tvah* formerly included in *Dathu* all joined the upper part. In spite of the transformations in the northern part, *Kone* remains more traditional.

- ***Inside, Outside***

The *tvah* can also be divided into those inside and those outside the city wall built during the Malla period. The Maharjan declare their quarters to be outside or inside the gates of the city (new : *dhoka pine/ dhoka dune)*. Of our list of 28 *tvah*, only three of them are outside : Tha Bahi, Jamo and Maga.

Tha Bahi is the northernmost *tvah* of Kathmandu. The original Maharjan population still lives in this area (126 households). In spite of a division among themselves which took place twenty years ago, the social structure is still alive. Its territory, its population, its local associations (musical and others) and its temples (Nasah dyah, Gane dyah) are all intact. The only difference is that it is located beyond the gates of Kathmandu.

The other two *tvah*, Jamo and Maga, are similar in that they both lost their territories. The territory of Jamo was originally situated north of Rani Pokhari, between Kantipath and Durbar Marg, in the present Seto Durbar. The Maharjan who were living there were turned out when Bir Shumsher Rana built the palaces of Seto Durbar, Lal Durbar, Phora Durbar and Narayan Hiti, at the end of the last century. Most of the inhabitants of Jamo settled inside the city of Kathmandu. Nowadays there are 100 households, most of them located at Kosi Bahal, Tyauda, Kamalachi and Basundhara (between Balaju and Bansbari). They belong to the same *tvah*, but they have spread into different areas of the city. They lost their territorial unit ; nevertheless they keep their own divinities for festivals. For example, the *Tvah Gane Dyah* is in Kamaladi. They do not worship Ganesh at this temple every morning because it is too far away from their homes. They visit other secondary shrines of Ganesh nearer their houses. But during their main festival, they go and carry the statue of the Gane dyah of their own *tvah*.

Although the Jamo's inhabitants now live inside the city, this *tvah* is considered to be outside of the city.

Concerning Maga, the story is a little bit more complicated. The original territory of this *tvah* is near the area of Bhotahiti. Years ago, the population went to Maga (Maligaon), 2 km east of the city. This *tvah* is composed of *Mu* people, a sub-group of the Maharjan caste. These Farmers are connected with Taleju and are in charge of cultivating the six kinds of flowers used during the the goddess' cult. They left Kathmandu because of the lack of space and the care required for this work.

According to Sina Bhai Munikar, a Mu of Bhotahiti, the Mu split into two groups : one remained in Bhotahiti and the other one went to Maga. The social institutions were also divided : the *dhimay guthi* went to Maga and the *dapha khola* remained in Bhotahiti. Nowadays all the determinant elements of the *tvah* (Nasah dyah's shrine, Gane dyah's shrine, *Akhah chẽ*) are located outside of the city. Of the 62 current households, 16 still live in Maga. The two other important places where the Mu live now are Maiti and Bhotahiti (12 and 10 households respectively) ; the rest have spread out over Kathmandu and are found in Jyatha, Damaitol, Lainchaur or Siphal.

This *tvah* has a territory (Maga) which is not its original one (Bhotahiti), but all the elements of the *tvah* have been transfered. Nevertheless, some connections between Bhotahiti and Maga are still alive : every year during Laksmi *puja*, the *Mu* carry the statue of their divinity, Maiti devi, to Bhotahiti.

The study of these *Dhoka pine tvah* would not be complete without speaking about **Kwa Bahal**. We did not mention this *tvah* earlier because the population declares itself to be inside the city. But, if we look at the remains of the Malla wall, in M. Slusser's *Nepal Mandala* (21) for example, we can see that the northern boundary of the wall is in Thahiti. Kwa Bahal is located north of Thahiti square. The Maharjan say that Thahiti is the southern boundary of their *tvah*. We can say though that all the temples and sacred places of the *tvah* are situated inside the city. Taking the religious places and not the residences as roots for the *tvah,* we understand the population's feeling of belonging to the city.

Let us now study the evolution of the Maharjan population and which role the Farmers play in the town.

• *Spatial evolution*

One distinct characteristic of the Maharjan population is to belong to and to remain attached to a territory by the association of Nasah *(Nasah guthi).* Today, however, the harmony between the social and the spatial structures is very often broken for different reasons :

- Quarrels between the inhabitants, as we saw above.
- The price of land, which has been steadily increasing in the capital over the last two or three decades. In Ombahal, for example, 30 years ago one *ropani* (22) of land cost 15.000 Rupies ; nowadays the same area costs about 1.500.000 or 2.000.000 Rupies. Renting houses and speculating have become good ways to earn money. The Maharjan move outside of Kathmandu and rent or sell their houses in the city. One of the worst cases is in Makhā *tvah,* where only two original Maharjan families are still living. All the other families have moved elsewhere.
- Lack of space in the *tvah* is also a reason for departure. Yutu nani, for example, is a very small *tvah*. There is only one courtyard. 40 families live here and there is no more room. 65 families have gone to settle outside.

The importance of the Maharjan : different contributions

• *In the tvah*

The Farmers play an important role in the *tvah,* especially during several local festivals. The whole population of the quarter gathers at that time. This is the case in a ritual called *mara ja nakegu,* usually celebrated after the rice harvest. The Maharjan have to cook the newly harvested rice and have to feed all the children living in the quarter,even if they are of higher castes. Besides giving offerings daily, people worship Ganesh *(Tvah Gane dyah)* once a year. The festival of Nasah dyah is usually celebrated twice a year. During these festivals, the Maharjan have to play music with *dhimay*.

The responsibility of the Farmers extends to other fields as well. The *nayo,* a kind of administrator for the *tvah,* is often chosen from the Maharjan caste. He has to solve disputes between persons who live in the quarter. He is responsible for most of the work undertaken on the local level and is paid by the *guthi*. This hereditary function held by the Maharjan shows the power that they have in the *tvah*. In a way, it is a reflection of the fact that they were the first settlers in the *tvah*.

• *In the town*

The Maharjan people also have responsibilities which concern the whole town. We find the same duties on the town level as on the *tvah* level. The Farmers who play music during the *pujas* of the *tvah* also play music for the *jatra* involving all of Kathmandu. Some of these festivals involve the Maharjan's divinities, and in them, the division between the upper and lower part of the city is emphasized. The Maharjans play a role in the following three major festivals of Kathmandu :

- During *Pahā Carhe (Ghode jatra), Ajimas* of *Thahne* are carried around by in large in the upper part of Kathmandu and to some other closely related *tvah*.

- During *panchami* of Dasain, the festival of Pacali Bhairav, (the divinity of *Kone)*, the pot which symbolizes the god is carried around mostly in the southern part.
- During Indra *jatra*, the Farmers are mainly associated with Indra and Bhairava cults. They play *dhimay* as well as other drums when these two gods are celebrated.

The Maharjan also hold responsibilities in other fields.

- They have to put narrow temporary bridges over the rivers during the winter. The bridges are put up during the festival of Tihar on the day of *mha puja* and taken down during Bal Carhe (November-December). The bridges over the Bagmati River are put up by the Maharjan of Wotu and Thanani ; the ones over the Visnumati are built by the Farmers of Nyeta and Asan Kamalachi Pilatu.
- The Maharjan have also to clean two wells of the town during rain-making rituals.

-> One, *Japatu* (Bhara Barsa Inar), is located in *Kone*, at Musum Baha ;

-> The other one is in *Thahne*, in Asan Kamalachi *Pilatu*.

These paragraphs summarize the main contributions of the Maharjan to the town and to the Newar urban community. As a matter of fact, the Farmers play a prominent role, especially in religious events.

The *tvah* : a symbolic spatial unit

Unlike the administrative way of dividing Kathmandu into 35 wards (23), of which the common element is, for instance, the municipality office, the *tvah* cannot be defined by administrative references. Besides, the *tvah* has no functional value with regard to the Farmers traditional activities. Those who still cultivate the land are not the owners of the land. Most of Maharjan are tenants. Thus, they work at different places, spread out all around the town and not in one area as we might have expected. Some associations and labour exchange for production exist, but they are based on the location of the fields and not on adherence to a *tvah*. The *tvah* does not organize agricultural production. Even though Farmers do dry their harvests in public spaces of the *tvah*, this is more a question of convenience than of working together. Presently, the *tvah* is linked neither with the economy nor with the current administration. It is a purely social organization highly visible in the administratively oriented urban landscape. Even though the *tvah* are slowly disappearing because of changes in society, they still remain strong in their ritual role and in their organization of *guthi*. These two cultural elements allow the Maharjan quarter to survive. It is through the various festivals which take place in the old city that the *tvah* division is still visible.

Conclusion

As pointed out by N. Gutschow, trade obviously played a prominent role in the genesis and growth of Kathmandu (24). The city has greatly profited from its key location along the Trans-Himalayan road. Since the beginning of the first millennium A.D., its rise is linked with large movements of goods and persons from Tibet to India, and vice-versa. Buddhist Mahayana monasteries also stand as a crucial factor in the development of the urban fabric : up to the present day, these religious centers constitute major landmarks in the symbolism of the city and mirror the overall spatial arrangement of the urban settlement. Yet, our case study clearly reveals that a third element, namely the urban Farmers, has to be taken into account when dealing with the history of Kathmandu. Maharjan are an outstanding feature and an integral part of the Newar cityscape. Such a role undoubtedly goes back to the very origin of the town. It is convenient at this point to sum up some our findings in this respect.

The Maharjan of Kathmandu are closely associated with a cylindrical drum which is one of the oldest musical instruments of the Newars and is supposed not to have been borrowed from outside. It is surely not by accident that this instrument has been choosen by the Maharjan to embody their identity and to strengthen their social organization. Farmers are also the caretakers (if not the priests) of the main temples of the city. Interestingly enough, among these temples we find deities who, like the god of music Nasah dyah, belong to the oldest heritage of Newar culture and have been incorporated only later on into the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon. The cult of the Ajima, perhaps also of Aju dyah (with the curious emphasis on beer pots), are instructive in this connection. Besides, Maharjan are linked with the fondation of some major temples and/or deities of Kathmandu (Janmadyah, Indra), and a detailed analysis of Newar royal rituals - beyond the scope of this paper - would illuminate the relevance of Farmers for kingship. All this points to far remote origins in the indigenous Valley past. We are no doubt facing remnants of an old, maybe the most archaic stratum of Kathmandu. Considering all these factors, we reach the conclusion that the Maharjan are among the oldest dwellers, if not *the* oldest dwellers of the city. Further proof of this can be found in the control that Farmers exert over the symbolic space by guiding communal processions within the settlement.

This complex set of ethnographic data coroborates the hypothesis that Kathmandu developed from a number of separate villages which, in time, grew together. Obviously, the present unified structure of the old part of the city is a recent phenomenon. It can be traced back roughly to Ratna Malla, in the 15th century, and to the building of a royal palace in the center of the city. The lower half of Kathmandu still has its own urban fabric, its own temples (Pacali Bhairav), and its own religious practices differing slightly from those of the upper half. It constitutes a world unto itself. There is good reason to believe that this area was incorporated into the city proper at a later stage.

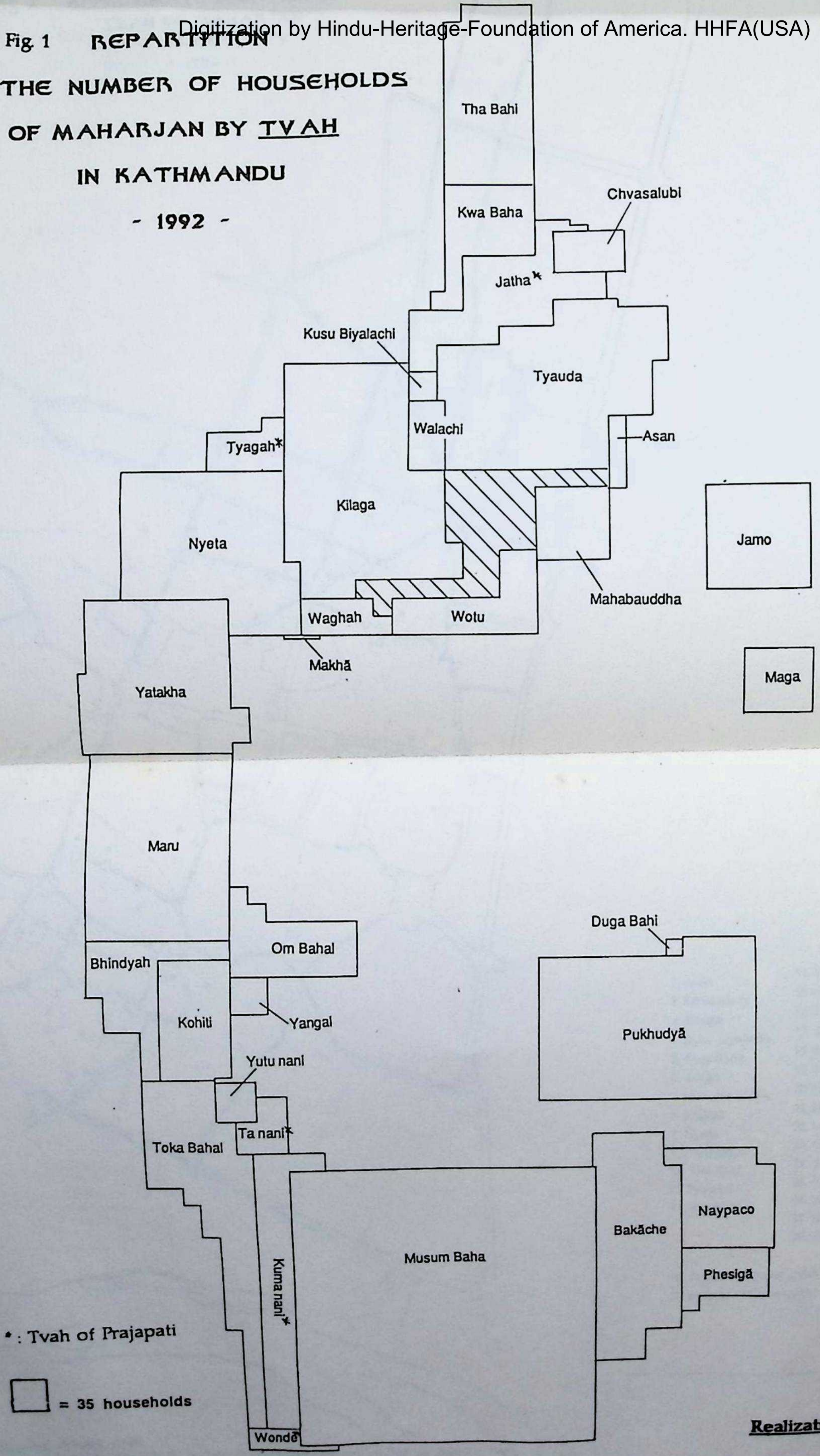
Kathmandu, or more properly traditional Kathmandu, can therefore be categorized as a "rural city" or an "agro-town". Although confronting th eways and means of twentieth century modernity, the city preserves some traces of its (at least partly) rural origins. In addition, the capital of Nepal is also characterized by the persistence of family structures pertaining to the village landscape. As indicated, the lineage still forms a important locus of identification for the urban Maharjan and it still associated with important ceremonies. Recent ethnographic evidence shows that the same situation is at work in other Newar towns and among other Newar urban castes (25). As a matter of fact, there is no sharp difference between urban and rural social structure within Newar civilization. We must admit that cities are much more multicaste in nature and express the fullest development of the caste system under the direction of a king. But as far as the internal structure of the caste is concerned, the continuum is noteworthy. Urban and village studies point to the same basic social determinants : hierarchical order based on pure and impure, the seniority principle, the paramount importance of the *guthi* association system, shallowness of kinship units, closeness of residence units, particular relevance of territorial and blood-drinking deities, etc. In both worlds, the system within which the activity occurs and which makes it meaningful is a religious system. Even architecture and habitat are almost identical : both are clearly organized by a similar network of paths and nodes with religious buildings playing a primary role.

Nevertheless, there is a notable difference between Kathmandu and village Maharjan. One of the most striking features of the social organization of Kathmandu's Farmers is the rigid insistence on exogamy at the quarter level. Now, the opposite is true in rural areas. As a rule, the Newar Maharjan village is mostly endogamous. Sometimes, such endogamy is reinforced by strict regulations. It is consequently inacurrate to speak of a "village in the city". Sociologically, the two residence units operate along different lines. What happens in Kathmandu is that the territorially-based quarter social groupings are endowed with marital functions (exogamy) to the detriment of kinship groups. The consanguineal bond does not disappear, but it is more or less swallowed by the territorial unit. In other words, the Farmer quarter within the city is not like an isolated cell, secluded from the outside. It is outwardly-oriented. Emphasis is put on links with the other Maharjan *tvah* of the city.

The remarkable thing is that such a pattern is restricted to Kathmandu. In Patan and Bhaktapur, the two other large Newar towns, the Maharjan belonging to one quarter do not form an exogamous unit : they can marry among themselves provided no consanguineal ties can be traced. The endogamous/ exogamous opposition does not therefore coincide with the village/city dichotomy. The peculiar situation prevailing in Kathmandu may perhaps be explained by the modest size of its Maharjan community compared with the whole population of the city. What we are suggesting here is that this group opted for such a complex system, with corresponding exogamy, to retain and strengthen its internal unity within an urban settlement where it was becoming more and more a minority. In danger of being absorbed or totally dominated by other castes, Farmers enacted exogamous regulations, establishing an active network among the "32 *tvah*" of the city. No one can doubt that the present vitality of the Maharjan community springs from this arrangement.

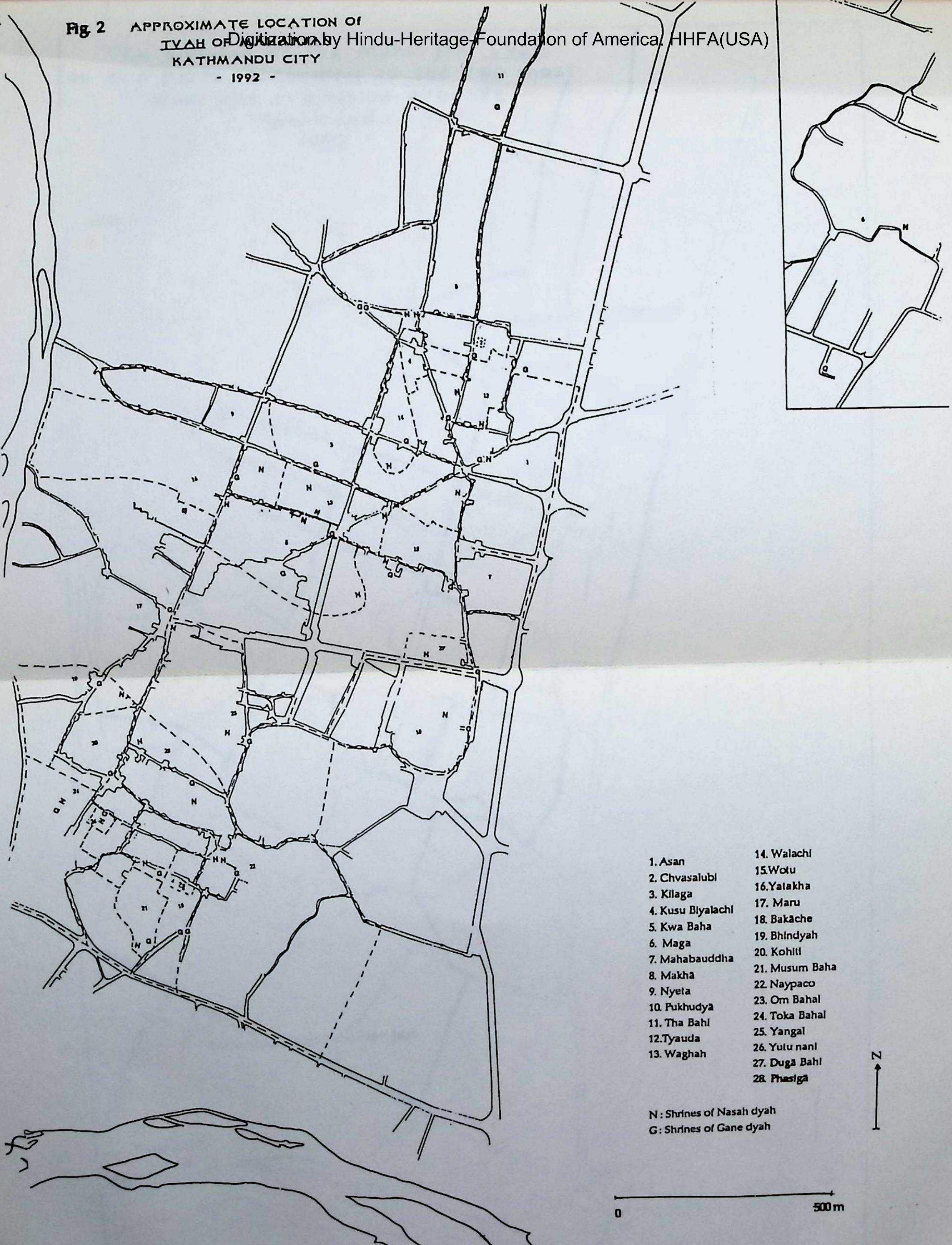
May 1992

Fig. 1 REPARTITION
OF THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS
OF MAHARJAN BY TVAH
IN KATHMANDU
- 1992 -

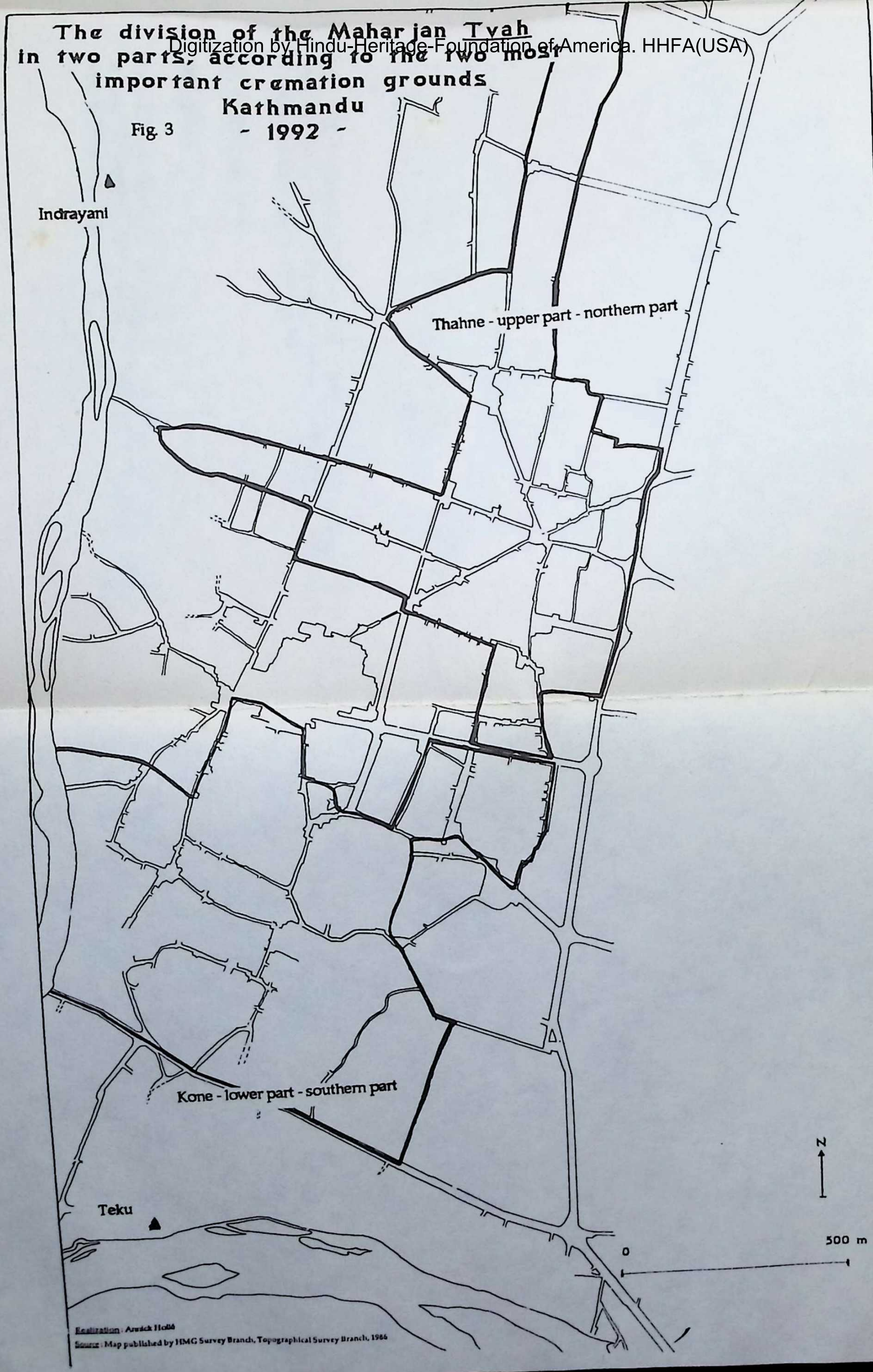

Tha Bahi
Kwa Baha
Chvasalubi
Jatha*
Kusu Biyalachi
Tyauda
Walachi
Asan
Tyagah*
Kilaga
Nyeta
Jamo
Mahabauddha
Waghah
Wotu
Makhā
Yatakha
Maga
Maru
Duga Bahi
Om Bahal
Bhindyah
Yangal
Kohiti
Pukhudyā
Yutu nani
Ta nani*
Toka Bahal
Naypaco
Bakāche
Musum Baha
Kumanani*
Phesigā
Wondē
*: Tvah of Prajapati
▢ = 35 households

Realization: Annick Hollé

Fig 2 APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF TVAH OF [illegible] KATHMANDU CITY - 1992 -


1. Asan
2. Chvasalubi
3. Kilaga
4. Kusu Biyalachi
5. Kwa Baha
6. Maga
7. Mahabauddha
8. Makha
9. Nyeta
10. Pukhudya
11. Tha Bahi
12. Tyauda
13. Waghah
14. Walachi
15. Wotu
16. Yatakha
17. Maru
18. Bakãche
19. Bhindyah
20. Kohiti
21. Musum Baha
22. Naypaco
23. Om Bahal
24. Toka Bahal
25. Yangal
26. Yutu nani
27. Dugã Bahi
28. Phasigã
N: Shrines of Nasah dyah
G: Shrines of Gane dyah
N
0
500 m

Realization: Annick Hollé
Source: Map published by HMG Survey Branch, Topographical Survey Branch, 1986.



The division of the Maharjan Tyah in two parts, according to the two most important cremation grounds
Kathmandu
Fig. 3 - 1992 -

Indrayani
Thahne - upper part - northern part
Kone - lower part - southern part
Teku
N
0
500 m

Realization : Annick Hollé

Source : Map published by HMG Survey Branch, Topographical Survey Branch, 1986

References

(1) - Cf. S. M. Greenwold, "Buddhist Brahman", *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, XV, 1974, p. 108.

(2) - Cf. for instance R.K. Vajracarya, *Items of our Food Culture*, Kathmandu, Hiranarayana, 2039 B. S. , pp. 39-40. Cf. also D. Gellner & R. P. Pradhan, "The Social Organization of Urban Peasants : the Maharjan (Jyapu) of Kathmandu and Lalitpur", in *Newar Society*, Eds. D. Gellner & D. Quigley, in press.

(3) - N. Gutschow, *Stadtraum und Ritual der Newarischen Städte im Kathmandu-tal*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1982, pp. 110-111.

(4) - Cf. G. Toffin, *Société et religion chez les Néwar du Népal*, Paris, Ed. du C.N.R.S., 1984, ch. VII & VIII.

(5) - S. Wiehler - Schneider and H. Wiehler, "A Classification of the Traditional Musical Instruments of the Newars", *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, vol. 4, 1980, p. 92.

(6) - Cf. I. Grandin, *Music and Media in Local Life. Music Practice in a Newar Neighbourhood in Nepal*, Linköping, Linköping University, 1989, p. 69.

(7) - *Idem*, pp. 68-69.

(8) - *Idem*, pp. 68-69.

(9) - Cf. for instance T. Ellingson. "Nasahdyah, Newar god of music. A photo essay", *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology*, vol. 8, 1990, pp. 221-272.

(10) - I. Grandin, op. cit., p. 71.

(11) - T. L. Manandhar, *Newari - English Dictionary,* Delhi, Agam kalaPrakashan, 1986, (Ed. by A. Vergati), p. 119.

(12) - Cf. for instance G. M. Wegner, *The dhimay baja of Bhaktapur*, Wiesbaden Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner G. M. B. H., 1986, pp. 18-19.

(13) - Simplifying, this part is composed by all the *tvah* located south of Hanuman Dhoka. We shall come back to this division when dealing with the repartition of the *tvah* in the town.

(14) - The drum which the Maharjan also play, smaller than the *dhimay* and less important.

(15) - The sample consists of 120 names. Some of them are not used and some are Newari names which we could not locate (less than 10).

(16) - Ancient Buddhist monasteries, numerous in Kathmandu.

(17) - The only two streets which do not lead to religious places are situated in Thamel, the tourist quarter of Kathmandu located in the northern part of the town. In this case, the given marks are names of restaurants or hotels.

(18) - The Nepali name for very narrow streets inside the city.

(19) - R.K. Vajracarya, *Items of our Food culture,* Kathmandu, Hiranarayana, 2039 B. S., pp. 39-40.

(20) - Two explanations for not having *dhunya* were given by the Maharjan. The first is that Narsing is an incarnation of Vishnu, who is on the top of the divine hierarchy. The

summit of the *dhunya* is occupied by Hanuman. If Maharjans carried the *dhunya* near the sanctuary of Narsing, Hanuman would be physically higher than Vishnu, which should not occur. The second explanation is that the *dhunya* might cast a shadow on the shrine of Narsing If this happened,Vishnu would be in the shadow, which again is antithetical to the Maharjan's believes.

(21) - Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, 1982, Vol. II, carte 8.

(22) - One ropani = 509 m^2

(23) - Two new wards were created on Baisakh 26th, 2048 (April 1992). At that time, the ward number 10 (Baneswar) was divided into three parts : East Baneswar (n° 34), Baneswar (n° 10) and Koteswar (n° 35).

(24) - N. Gutschow, "Kathmandu : Historical Development, Spatial Structure, Social and Ritual Topography", in *Kathmandu City*, Innsbruck, Universitätsverlag Wagner ("Khumbu Himal", band 5, lief 3), 1979, p. 249.

(25) - For Kathmandu, see T. T. Lewis, *The Tuladhars of Kathmandu : A study of Buddhist Tradition in a Newar Merchant Community*. Columbia University, Unpublished Ph.D, 1984, R. P. Pradhan, *Domestic and Cosmic Rituals among the Hindu Newars of Kathmandu*, Nepal, New Delhi, 1986, unpublished Ph.D., and D. Gellner & R. P. Pradhan : "The Social organization of urban peasants ...", *op. cit.*. For Bhaktapur, cf. R. I. Levy, *Mesocosm, Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

LIST OF THE PRESENT MAHARJAN TOLS OF KATHMANDU

DATHU							
TOL	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	DHIMAY GUTHIYAR	OUTSIDE OR INSIDE	WALA CONEGU	MASAN (PITH)	MAIN DIVINITY	DHUNYA
MARU	161	161	Inside	Swayambhu	Laka Tirtha	Maru Gane dyah Asok Vinayak	yes

KONE							
TOL	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	DHIMAY GUTHIYAR	OUTSIDE OR INSIDE	WALA CONEGU	MASAN (PITH)	MAIN DIVINITY	DHUNYA
BAKACHE	150	70	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
BHINDYAH	87	24	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Bhindyah	no
		24					
KO HITI	75	75	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Nil Varahi	no
MUSUM BAHA	300	300	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
NAYPACO	90	135	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
(Phasigã)	70	40 & 80					
OM BAHAL	84	40 &30	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	yes
TOKA BAHAL	130	140	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
YANGAL	36	19	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
YUTU NANI	40	105	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no

LIST OF THE PRESENT MAHARJAN TOLS OF KATHMANDU

THAHNE							
TOL	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	DHIMAY GUTHIYAR	OUTSIDE OR INSIDE	WALA CONEGU	MASAN (PITH)	MAIN DIVINITY	DHUNYA
ASAN							
Bhotahiti/Kisan	17	16	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Annapurna	yes
Kamalachi/Pilatu	18	18	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Annapurna	no
CHVASALUBI	50	145	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Mhaipi Ajima	yes
JAMO	100	100	Outside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Kamaladi Gane dyah	yes
KILAGA	185	180	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Hati Gane dyah	yes
KUSU BIYALACHI	25	25	Inside	Siga	Luti Ajima	Swansafu Gane dyah	yes
KWA BAHA	84	84	Inside	Siga	Luti Ajima	-	yes
MAGA (Maligaon)	16	157	Outside	Maiti Devi	Maiti	Maiti Devi	no
MAHABAUDDHA	70	70	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Luchu Maru Ajima	yes
MAKHA	2	80	Inside	Swayambhu	Konga Ajima	Tarani Ajima	yes
NYETA	150	90	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Sveti kali	yes
PUKHUDYA	175	175	Inside	Bhadrakali	Teku	Bhadrakali	yes
THA BAHI	126	111 15	Outside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Garujuju	yes
TYAUDA	167	180	Inside	Swayambhu Luti Ajima	Luti Ajima	Luti Ajima	yes
WAGHAH	58	60	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Aju dyah (Akas Bhairav)	yes
WALACHI	50	50	Inside	Siga	Luti Ajima	Narsingh Aju	no
WOTU	100	150	Inside	Bhadrakali	Luti Ajima	Gasi dyah/Bhadrakali	yes
YATAKHA	150	70	Inside	Swayambhu	Konga Ajima	Konga Ajima	yes
DUGA BAHI	16	0	Inside	Bhadrakali	Teku	Bhadrakali	no

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS OF THE PEOPLE OF WESTERN NEPAL

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Prolegomenon

The land of Western Nepal is attractive not only for her snow-caped mountains, beautiful river-valleys and concourse of climate but also for assembly of diverse ethnic groups and caste-structured societies which live there since time immemorial and have presented a fine panorama of social life and lively traditions of religious and moral beliefs. The Aryans, the Mongoloids and the aborigines have blended in this inhospitable tract into one nationality under the parasols of the mighty Mallas and the Baisi Rajas and have created many religious models to be followed in their given social ladder. Before the occupation of the region by the Aryans and introduction of sectarian religions, animism dominated the life of the aboriginal people. However, when they accepted the religious traditions and beliefs of their over-shadowers, they became a part and parcel of the *Varna-Vyavastha* . The warrior-class of the region now became *Ksatriya* and the other inhabitants either *Vaisya* or *Sudra* remained instrumental in the service of the other two castes of the society in that region till the hey-days of the Ranas. Their religion either imbibed the traits of the Aryan groups, or of the aborigines in which local deities, ghosts and demons, chants and spells predominated with the multiplicity of offerings and sacrifices of animals including human beings.

The deities of Western Nepal, often benevolent, not only determined the destinies of the human beings but also intervened in the state affairs and through the aids of oracles (i.e. *dhami* or *jhakri*) when they inflicted some kind of punishment or fine on certain individual, it was unfailingly carried out in the region. If an individual, thus penalized, wanted to abstain from undergoing the punishment, the state was morally obliged to carry out the divine ordeal.

In the medieval period the state capitals of the Baisi Rajas turned out to be the great centres of religious activities, temple buildings, festivals and *jatras* and other kinds of holy rituals. This fact is amply attested by the religious activities of various towns of the region in the premises of the standing, dilapidated or ruined temples which even today grace these settlements. A systematic survey reveals that the people of the region either worship the cult-deities of Hinduism or local deities who were originated there by their ancestors, or that they believed in the tradition of the *dhamis* and *jhakris* and their divinities, magic of chants and spells and witchcraft. The popular side of the religion is expressed through the rituals which they perform at the time of the observation of sacraments in their homes, for the purpose of good harvest in different seasons, eradication of illnesses of various sorts of the family members, removal of obstacles caused by the planets and enemies and for the safety of their cattle-wealth and villages. In this group the pilgrimage of the holy sites, various kinds of donations and hearing of sacred scriptures are also included. These activities are included in the higher ideals of life and every conscious individual was premeated by these ideals of life for his emancipation from the chain of birth, death and rebirth, or from the chain of transmigration of soul. However, only a few rich and lucky persons of Western Nepal could pay their attention towards these higher ideals of religion. The rest, owing to their poverty and inability of mobility because of also joined this jatra and accelerated its charms (3). This festival stood for the syncretism of the Vaisnites and the Saivites. In the Panchakosi Tirtha, Lord Siva resides in the shape of Agni (fire). This sacred *tirtha* is particularly famous for providing great virtues and dispelling the sins of Kali (4). Those people who visit, touch and worship this sacred fire, get salvation in the end (5).

At Padukasthan, on the bank of river Bhairavi, people offer *pinda* (round lump of cooked rice-meals, etc. offered to the manes) to their ancestors and pray for their salvation. Not very far from Nabhisthan, on the east of Bhrigusthan are located the celebrated *kundas* (ponds) called the Brahma Kund, Visnu Kund and Siva Kund. The belief of the people is that by taking bath in them and worshipping Ksetrapala (Masta or Siva) one gets the full *punyas* (virtues) of pilgrimage of the Panchakosi Tirtha. There are many other *kundas* in this *tirtha* which are sacred like the three *kundas* of Nabhisthan and provide *mukti* (redemption) from the debts of the parents (*matri-pitri-rina*) to the bathers (6). In the second and third chapters of *Vaisvanara Purana* significance of all the sacred places, rivers and *kundas* have been detailed which elucidates that in account of the foundation of the rule of Muslims in India when the Hindus of Western Nepal found it difficult to undertake the journey of India for pilgrimage, developed these sites of Panchakosi region as their holy places of pilgrimage and sanctified them in the style of Varansi, Prayaga and Gaya.

The *jatra* of Panchakosi Tirtha starts after the worship of Siddhesvara (Lord Siva) and passes through Dhulisvar; Nabhisthan, Nasah-chaksu Ksetra, Preta Sila and Koti Tirtha. During this *jatra* people take bath in the Malati river and worship Madhava (Visnu) in the temple located on its bank. Because the worship of both Siva and Visnu is included in this *jatra,* it has been given the name of Hari-Shankari jatra by the learned people (*munayah*). One who participates in this *jatra* and hears the glory of Shankar-Narayana, dispells all his sins, gets the means of *bhukti* (various kinds of enjoyments) in this life and finds salvation after death (7). In the month of Magha since the entry of the sun in the zodiacal sign of Capricornus there are fairs at these holy sites and people from far off places come to attend them. At that time they worship the deities of this *tirtha* with great fervour and pray for happiness, progenies, fortune and longivity in this life and salvation after death.

Cult of Masta

The cult of Masta is very popular in Western Nepal. There exist a large number of temples of this deity in Dullu, Dailekh, Dadeladhura, Baitadi, Doti, Jumla, Bajhang, Bajura, Jajarkot and Sallyan. This shows that Masta exercises his influence over a vast region of Western Nepal between the Thakurjee Lekh and Siwalika Mountain. Worship of this deity commenced in Bajhang in the beginning of the fourteenth century (1308 A.D.) (8). Masta has been put as a witness on the documents of the Kulyalas and Dulalas and bells were offered on his *thanh* (abode) by the people after the fulfilment of their desires (9).

There is no icon of Masta. He is identified either with a *linga* or with a banner which is whisted in the vicinity of the *thanh* or temple of the deity, or with the heap of stones assembled at some convenient place of the village. The people of the villages call Masta by different names. Satyamohan Joshi has given three series of twelve names of this deity in his book (10).

The Mastas are either benevolent or maleficent and are worshipped by the people in demonical manner with the sacrifice of animals. However, some Mastas are strictly vegetarian and accept milk, cereals, sweet-cakes and flowers only. Tradition of *dhami* is widely prevalent in Western Nepal. Often these *dhamis* get overwhelmed by one such Masta, and when thus overwhelmed, they behave like the substitute of that god. They speak like a deity, provide solution to the problems of the villagers, decide cases of the contending parties and inflict fine or punishment on the sinners and criminals. Their judgements are revered by all the people of the region. For the decision of their cases, begetting progenies and removal of their diseases and various kinds of troubles people of even Dang, Surkhet, Nepalganj and Deukhuri of the region and Gorakhpur, Nainital and Kanpur of India used to come to visit the *dhamis* of Bajhang, Bajura and Jumla in the past (11). Although Masta is essentially the god of Ksatriyas, the people of low castes (i.e. the Kamins, Sarkis and Damais) of Western Nepal also worship him (12). The deity is worshipped either in a *ghara- mandu* (temple of the village) or *vana-mandu* (temple of the forest). The images made of wood and stone, are kept in the main hall of the temple and the remaining parts are used for ceremonies and festivities by the people (13).

Only the *dhami* has the right to worship Masta. He is selected from among the inhabitants of the locality due to his special magical qualities. When selected, the *dhami* had to go to the pilgrimage of the holy sites such as Rinamokse, Chhayanatha and Muktinath and to bring the seal of a reputed *dhami* to show the validity of his supernatural qualities. He then turns out to be a vegetarian and puts on *dhoti* (long- cloth) as his lower garment. Once someone becomes the *dhami* of certain Masta, he has to remain his *dhami* till his death (14).

On the day of *purnima* (i.e. the full-moon day of the month) Masta is particularly worshipped by the villagers and at that time he is assisted by the *dangri* , *pujari* and *khava* .

Each Masta has got a *bhana* (vehicles) who are often dreadful, can take any form and carry out the orders of their Masta. They punish the guilty and inflict diseases on the cruels. When someone is caught by a *bhana*, he pacifies him by offering animals of his taste (15). Mastas have got a large number of relatives. Mahadeo and Lama Visnu are the maternal uncles of this deity and the Nine Bhavanis, the sisters. The Mastas are considered by the people not only as great deities but also tutelary deities of the Ksatriyas in Western Nepal (16). Satyamohan Joshi has given several fascinating stories about the origin and deeds of the Mastas of this region (17).

Female cult

As there is no caste restriction in adopting the religion of the female goddesses, the people of Western Nepal have their great inclination towards Shaktism (Female Cult) and its multiple deities. Premanidhi, who was a court poet of Malaibama II of Parvat and has written a large number of books on Tantras, greatly popularized Tantricism and the cult of female divinities in Western Nepal (18). The gas- flames of Sirasthan, Nabhisthan and Padukasthan of Dullu region are regarded as the burning power of Shakti. An inscription of Padukasthan of 1385 A.D. describes the Jwaladevi temples as the abodes of Sri Vidyadevis (19). The *Vaisvanara Purana* extolls that "One who visits, touches, worships and performs *havana* (i.e. offers oblations in the ire) in the honour of the gas-shaped great goddess Jwaladevi, gets *mukti* (redemption from the bondage of birth, death and rebirth) in the end" (20). One who performs worship (*puja*) of the Nabhisthan temple is believed to have pleased both the deities and the *pitras* (dead ancestors) (21).

The *Varsakriyakaumidi* lays down that for the pacification of his troubles one should worship Goddess Kali in the month of Magha, and on the day of Krisna-chaturdasi of each month (22). The *Vaisvanara Purana* also prescribes the worship of Goddess Jwaladevi when the sun is in the zodiacal sign of Capricornus (i.e. in the month of Magha). It establishes the synonymity of Jwaladevi and Goddess Kali. The *stutis* (prayer-verses) of the goddess show that Jwaladevi is the consort of Lord Siva and if worshipped devotionally, she destroys the sins of her followers and bestows enough knowledge, wealth, fame, fortune and longevity on them (23).

There are a large number of temples of Kali (or Kalika), Malika and Bhavani in Western Nepal. These deities are particularly worshipped on the day of Sravana-purnima, during the Vijayadasami festival and on Chaitra-astami with the same kind of rites and rituals which show that Kali, Malika and Bhavani are the three different names of the Goddess Durga itself. Gaborieau and Joshi have described these goddesses under the Masta group of divinities. Their association with *dhami* and making of a special niche for the goddess in the temples of Masta for sacrifices and offerings of oblations indicates degeneration in the cult of the female goddesses during the later-medieval or early-modern period owing to the lack of patronage of the kings and nobles and illiteracy of the people of the region. The people of Doti, Bajhang and Bajura had great respects for Kali and Malika. The Malika temple of the Malaigiri hill-top of Bajura is regarded as one of the seven Shaktipithas. When the people of Jumla, Doti and Achham go for the *darsana* (visit) and *puja* (worship) of this deity, they present some tributes to the descendants of the king of Bimkot because he had first recognizes this abode of the goddess (24).

How Kali is worshipped by the people in Western Nepal is well revealed by an old document of early nineteenth century

A.D. (25). It reveals that each day the goddess (named as Bhimakali over here) should be worshipped with prayers, offering of lamps, donation of articles, recitation of the hymns of the *Durga-saptasati* , *bhoga* (articles of enjoyment of the goddess), *naivedya* (oblations of different kinds), sacrifice of the animals, festivities of different kinds and *daksina* (presents) to nine unmarried girls (*kumaris)*. On the day of important Hindu festivals, auspicious days and occasions of *jatra* and *varsavardhana,* special worship of the goddess was to be conducted. The *navaratris* of the months of Aswin and Chaitra were the particular days of luxurious worships. Thirty-five goats were to be sacrified during these festivals and twenty-seven *Durga-saptasati avartis* (recurrings) were to be conducted by the Brahmanas (26). Annual amount of expenses in the worship of the Kali temples were thus fixed and the required rituals and festivities were enthusiastically carried out till recently. The rituals and festivities of the Tripurasundari temples of Baitadi and Dolpo, Jalpadevi of Bajhang, Dulyadevi of Raskot and Salyanakot Mayi of Salyan are also conducted in the style of the Bhimakali temple.

Local deities

Local deities of folk origin play important role in the religious life of the people of Western Nepal. There are a large number of followers of these deities who reverently worship them with different kinds of oblations on the fixed days of the year. It is necessary to know something about these local deities because they appear to have been the outgrowth of Saivism and Vaisnavism. Guro and Kailash are two important deities of the Karnali basin. When someone suffers the vicissitudes of some unjust person, he invokes Guro. The deity is described as the son of Iswar and Gaura. Thus, he is a Saivite deity (27). Kailash is a very just and terrific deity and he possesses his own manacles and hand-cuffs and punishes the unjust people and sinners (28). Jagannatha and Bhanyara are popular among the people of Dullu, Kalikot and Dailekh (29). Dharmaraja and Ksetrapala were also worshipped as local deities by the people of the region. Ksetrapala was "beneficient deity" who did not force his worship on persons "by injuring them or their crops" (30). He was the tutelary deity of the Kalyalas who ruled over the Jumla Valley from the beginning of the fifteenth century till the last quarter of the eighteenth century A.D. (31).

Langa is an important deity of the Seti and Mahakali zones. The chronicles of Bajhang describe him as an offspring of Mahalinga and Kausalyadevi. As Rupa Jadeni Devi of Kathan developed great affection for him, he came to Western Nepal and after sometime he went to Bhot also. The deity not only opened a wide route of trade between India and Tibet through Bajhang but also suppressed the animistic and lamaistic religions, rampant earlier in the region. Langa is a very popular deity of Bajhang. At Dvala, Judikot and Garphu, his temples have been built and are enthusiastically worshipped by the people by offering the sacrifices of the animals (32). The Bedughati Deuta of Jiva Lekh and Dudhe Khapara and Lato Guro of Bajura are described by the people of the region as associated with Langa. They also impart justice to the people. People even from Humla and Jumla come to the *dhamis* of these deities for getting justice from them (33).

The people of Western Nepal believe in a large number of *bhutas* (ghosts) and *pretas* (evil spirits of the dead). When someone is caught by anyone of them, he offers *puja archa* and *bali* in his honour. Masane Bhuta is the most important among them. He is "usually found in burning grounds which are as a rule placed at the confluence of streams, and hence called Marghata" (34). He is supposed to be a creature of black colour and hideous appearance. One who dies from an accident, wasting disease or without getting his basic desires fulfilled, becomes a Masana and when he catches someone, the victim suffers from several kinds of vicissitudes (35). The Khole Bhuta and Kanautana Bhuta are equally dreadful. Jiburkhi Bhuta of Dhapa, Semja is described as dressed in *topi* (cap) and *vakkhu* . He always walks a stick in his hand (36).

The descendants of the Rainka Raja of Dhileti, Dadeladhura worship Madaleka in the Asigram temple. At the time of the festivals of Vijayadasami and on the occasions of *ekadasi* and *purnima* the deity receives special offerings and there are much rejoicings and festivities in the premises of the temple. After worshipping Madaleka, people go to worship Ugratara (37). The Kapadis, Bokatis and Churals of Bhalamana, Doti worship Gairyala, Vacchare, Gwalo and Thaule. If this Gairyala is Gorila of Nautiyal, the deity was worshipped in the Western Himalayas as far as Kumaon, Nainital, Almora and Garhwal (38). Gairyala is a vegetarian deity and therefore he receives the offerings of milk, rice and fruits only. The day of *astami* of the month of Magha is the special day of this deity. Bachhare is worshipped four times each year in the months of Asadha, Kartika, Magha and Vaisakha and at that time animals are also sacrificed in his honour. Thaule is also a vegetarian deity and is worshipped to ward off the shades of *boksis* (evil spirits) who often torture people and their animals (39).

The low-caste people and the untouchables of Western Nepal worship Kalasaini, Nilapala, Lato Deuta, Saima, Masani, Saipala and Ganganatha. Kalasaini is worshipped by the Sarkis with the offerings of the pigs. The Damais worship Nilapala with the offerings of goats and rams. The Paharis and Kolis worship Lato Deuta by offering goats. Dholis worship Saima and Lahures to Masani and Ganganatha. The Chandalas also worship Ganganatha. One legend, which is very famous in Western Nepal, reveals that once Ganganatha the inhospitality of the region, remained satisfied without doing anything to achieve this higher ideal in their life. In the light of the abovementioned backgroung, some notable features of the religious beliefs and traditions of the people which developed in the middle hill region of Western Nepal would be analysed at some length for the persual of this august assembly of scholars.

Traditional Hinduism

The basins of the Karnali, Bheri, Seti, Rapti and Gandaki rivers are the main strongholds of Hinduism in Western Nepal and several promising sites of pilgrimages have been developed there by the Hindu saints and savants. Vaisvanara Ksetra, Muktinath, Rinamokse, Ridi, Gosain Kund and Damodar Kund are the most noteworthy among them besides Mount Kailash and the Manasarowar Lake of the Tibetan plateau, now under the administration of the Chinese. The Himvatkhanda section of the *Skanda Purana* enumerates that for getting emancipation from the chain of transmigration one should visit these holy sites and pay his respects to the deities housed there. Beautiful temples have been built at these holy places and they contain charming idols or symbols of Hindu Panchayana deities which are ardently being worshipped since the olden time by the pilgrims of the site. Mount Kailash, the holy abode of Lord Siva, and Manasarowar Lake are being frequented by the Hindu pilgrims of India and Nepal since the beginning of the Kali age itself. The natives of Humla and Jumla often go there in the summer season. The people of Western Nepal often go to take bath in the three *kundas* (ponds) of Rinmokse Dah. The common belief in the region is that one who has not cleared off his or that of his ancestors debts is relieved of those debts by taking bath in the Dharma Kund of the site (1). At the time of Janai-purnima, those Hindus who can afford to undertake the journey of Gosain Kund, Damodar Kund and Muktinath go there for the holy bath and worship the deities installed in the sacred shrine of those sites. Muktinath is frequented both by the Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims.

The Hindu of Western Nepal worship Siva, Visnu, Shakti, Surya and Ganesha with great fervour. Saivism is fairly popular in the region. Vaisvanara Ksetra, Jagannath, Baijanath, Uk, Asigram, Gosain Kund, Ajayamerakot and Thalara are some popular sites of religious activities of the Saivites. Siva is worshipped at these places in his various forms by the devotees. In the Dailekh district at Sirasthan, Nabhisthan and Padukasthan stone temples were built by the Mallas and the Dulala Rajas on the gas-flames which are deemed as the flames which sprung from the third eye of Lord Siva and ablazed to destroy Kamadeva, the god of love and amourosity, at the time he wanted to create disturbance in the meditation of the god. Presently the Nath sectaries have taken possession of these holy sites and Nathism and Saivism have become synonymous there after the fusion of two religions and identification of Lord Siva with Yogesvara and predominance of Yoga in the Nathism. The documents of the Shah period reveal that after the inclusion of Dullu and Dailekh in the Gorkhali dominion more land and facilities were made available to the custodians of these temples from the side of the government for the worship and festivities of the gods and goddesses of various temples in more impressive manner (2).

In the temples each day the deities are worshipped in traditional manner by the offerings of *dhupa* (incense), *dipa* (lamp), flowers, *achhata* (grains of rice used in ceremonies), etc. and on the days of *parvas* (festivals) special worship of the main deity is conducted by the *pujari* (attending priest). In the past Hari-Shankari Jatra was organized at the Panchakosi Tirtha in the style of Saiva Jatra of Pasupati. On one occasion in 1358 A.D. King Prithvimalladeva of Dullu and Saima furiously quarrelled. In the combat Saima became victorious after inflicting a wound on the head of Ganganatha and making him senseless. When Ganganatha recovered his sense, he promised to destroy the followers of Saima. Thereupon, Saima requested Ganganatha not to do so and the latter agreed to remain silent on the condition that sacrifices of the human beings would be offered to him by the former. That is why, human beings were sacrificed in the honour of Ganganatha at Patan till 1790 A.D. After Ranabahadur Shah conquered the town, he stopped this inhuman tradition of the adherants. Nowadays only goats and cocks are offered to this deity. As Ganganatha accepted blood, Saima turned vegetarian. Since this incident he accepts *khira* (rice-pudding) made of milk, rice and sugar only (40). The local deities of Western Nepal do not possess any structural shrine; their abodes are either on some tree or at the elevated ground of the village. These abodes are described as *thanh.* They generally remain decorated with the strips of red clothes hung on the trees, and the banners on long poles. Some *thanhs* have got modest structure of stone slabs and wooden logs and rafters showing a niche of the deity for the offerings of the worshippers. A portico is also built inside the chamber and it contains the idols which are offered at the *thanh* by the adherants. Generally the structure of the *thanh* faces to the side of Mount Kailash, i.e. north. The festivals and dances of the deity are performed inside the shrine. These *thanhs* are called *mandu* and looked after by several hereditary officials (41). References to *thanhs* are found in several documents of Western Nepal. The *thanh* of Siddha Samsaranatha of Gulmi is very famous and nowadays it is under the possession of the followers of Nath Sect. The puja conducted at the *thanhs* is called *paitha* . The *paitha* of Sravana-purnima is very popular in the Karnali basin. Almost all the deities of the Jumla Valley are worshipped on this day in traditional manner. In course of the worship of the deities, feasts, dances, music and humourous jokes are very common and they are the source of great rejoicings to the people of the villages (42). The general belief of the people in the region is that if the deities have been properly worshipped, their dangers and calamities will be over. Although it is difficult to trace the origin of these folk deities, it seems that some of them are older even that the sectarian gods and goddesses of Hinduism and Buddhism. Aboriginal elements were quite dominant in the formation of their theology and modes of worship (43).

Concluding remarks

The middle hill region of Western Nepal is mostly inhabited by the Ksatriyas, Brahmans and the people of low castes who practice Hinduism since the time of their settlement in the region. Observing various kinds of *vratas* (vows and feasts), listening of the *kathas* (stories) of the Puranas, celebrating important festivals of the year such as Sravana- purnima, Magha-panchami, Vijayadasami and Chaitra-navaratri, performing the Sandhya-Gayatri and pilgrimage of the holy *tirthas* and sacrifice of the animals in the honour of the deities are some important features of the religious side of the people (44). Tripurasundari, Kalika, Masta, Bhairava, Chandananatha, Jagannatha, Ugratara, Narasimha, Varaha, Silagarhi Devi and Ksetrapala exercize great influence on the Hindus of Western Nepal. These deities are worshipped for getting progenies, promotions in the life, destruction of the enemies and for the realization of four *purusarthas* called *dharma* , *artha* , *kama* and *moksa* . In course of worship, *naivedya* , milk, curd, flowers and colours formed the main items of oblation besides the *bali* (sacrifice) of the animals. Singing of the glory of the deity, recitation of his sacred *mantra* and meditation on his visual form are also included in the worship of the deities. The Brahmans and the *pujaris* of the temples were quite instrumental in the propagation of Hinduism and restoration of the religious beliefs and traditions among the masses, and it greatly helped in the restoration and preservation of a just, moral and traditional society in the region (45).

Owing to the rugged landscape of Western Nepal, the religious traditions and beliefs which originated in the past and flourished during the medieval times are even today prevalent in the region, despite the influx of modern ideas and scientific education of the modern times. In Western Nepal even today the deities speak with the people through the mouth of the *dhami* , and in the past when the governments were not so strong, they served as judges and law-givers and restored law and order as well as harmony among the people of different ethnic groups (46).

To quote Atkinson from his famous book *Religion of the Himalayas* , p. 839, the truth in Nepal is that "the popular religion in the hills is worship of fear. Though Bhagavan is named as great god, he is supposed to allow mischievous and malignant spirits to injure the persons and property of people. When famine and pestilence stalks abroad, the village temples are crowded and promises of oblations are made." (47). The worship of the deities are conducted in the mixed form derived from the rituals and ceremonies of Tantric Vaisnavism, Saivism, Shaktism and Buddhism. Human practice came to an end after the beginning of the Gorkhali rule in the region (48). Even today owing to Muktinatha, Vaisvanara Ksetra, Rinamokse Ksetra, Gosain Kund and Ridi Ksetra, Western Nepal is deemed as the most sacred region of the Himvadkhanda.

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A RITUAL KING: SOME ETHNOGRAPHIC DATAS ON THE DASAIN FESTIVAL IN ARGHA RAJASTHAL

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In recent years, anthropologists have shown a growing interest for the Nepalese Dasain. Curiously enough, very few works specifically dealing with this festival have been yet published in western languages. However, parts of a number of articles and books have demonstrated the great value of the subject for both sociological and cultural studies on Nepal (1).

From a sociological point of view, Dasain is a ritual frame in which, at every level, positions of authority are regularly asserted or reasserted. The tenth day (Dasami) in each house, the father puts *tika* on the forehead of his wife, younger brothers and children. A few years ago, the village headman, the *mukhiya,* used to do the same with all householders of his *taluk* (2). And still today in the royal palace, on Dasami, the King gives *tika* to his ministers (3). Similarly, relations of patronage between the King of Nepal and numerous Devi sanctuaries all over the country are openly expressed during Dasain, when on the seventh day, *prasad* -"grace" in the form of offerings accepted by the divinity (4) - is sent from each of them to the capital. In the same way, before 1962, each *mukhiya* -or *mahamukhiya* - had to send a tribute of allegiance, made of a wood-pot filled with yoghourt and a banana trunk, to Gorkha or Kathmandu (5). These modest but meaningful gifts, from the localities to the center, somehow reinforce the links revealed by the *tika* , taking the opposite way, in a process of national integration by symbolic means (6).

From a cultural point of view, beyond the specific importance of Dasain in Nepal, as compared with Durga puja in North India, the striking diversity in the way it is celebrated in each region should draw the attention of researchers. As a matter of fact, if Dasain represents a true "national festival", the details of its performance are far from being similar from one locality to another. Differences rarely affect the domestic ceremonies and even on the public side, the main rites are distributed over the same general sequence. It is the setting of the collective ceremonies which reveals specific not only of a particular region but often of each sanctuary. And it seems to me that such particularities directly lead to certain points -at least to certain questions- on the local history and culture which would have been otherwise overlooked.

In this paper I will consider the Dasain taking place in Argha Rajasthal, the capital town of a former principality of Central Nepal, Argha, now situated in Argha Khanci district. I won't try to go deeply into the analysis of political processes at play during this particular Dasain, neither of the cultural or historical background it reflects (7). My first aim here will be to draw the attention on what I consider to be the main peculiarity of Argha's Dasain: the exhibition of a royal character playing a central role in most rites.

All ceremonies held in Argha Rajasthal for Cait and Bada Dasain are financed by a *raj guthi* , a state donation of rice-land, which covers also all expenses incurred by the regular cult of Argha Bhagavati, including maintenance of her sanctuary (8). A certain area of land is assigned to each of the 40 titulars who contribute to the cult, either by providing ritual services or goods. Almost all *jat* are concerned, from the Upadhyay Bahun reading the sacred texts (*ved padne*) to the Gaine singing *malsiri* songs in honour of the Goddess, including, among others, Newar who provide cloths and sing *bhajan*, and Kumhal expected to bring earthen pots, fishes and bananas. According to the local tradition, royal patronage of the cult was set up by the first king of Argha, Jilla Rai, after he conquered the locality, some 400 years ago; he made his own *raj guru* , Ram Bhakta, responsible for the conduct of religious ceremonies. The present *guthi* was handed over by king Rajendra Bikram Saha of Nepal in a *lal mohar* (royal edict) dated 1890 VS (1833 AD), some 47 years after the conquest of Argha by Gorkha and 29 years after its full annexion to Nepal. Later on, nine decrees were issued at different dates to confirm initial arrangements and settle disputes between holders of charge.

Although Argha kings had been dismissed in 1843 VS, following their military defeat, the new *guthi* provided charges and corresponding lands for an "agent of Saha dynasty" (*karta sahavasiya)*, i.e. their descendants of Thakuri status, who actually call themselves "Sahi". They trace their origin up to a prince said to have come from Garhval and who conquered Argha presumably in early 17th century AD. The "Thakuri", as we will refer to the titular of this charge, is expected to officiate during the 15 days of Bada Dasain in what looks like a piece of theatre but which has a strong ritual meaning.

From the first day of Asvin light fortnight to Purnima (fullmoon), the ancient palace compound where Bhagavati shrine is situated seems to come back to what its life was some 200 years back. The Thakuri settles in what is believed to have been the royal apartments, at the first floor of the main building. There, a fire-place is arranged where his daily meals will be cooked by his "servants" (*susare*), two *guthiyar* of Magar *jat* supposed to stay by his side day and night to meet his requirements. Similarly, till a few years ago, two Pande Chetri guards (*citaidar*) were posted before the entrance. And not the least, a so-called " *pandit* " assists the Thakuri for all indoor rites.

Actually the place looks more like a sanctuary rather than a palace's interior. To be precise, its setting is more or less similar to the domestic altar installed in any ordinary house during the festival, the *dasai ghar* : at the southern corner, a small chapel, called *Dasai kotha* , where Argha Bhagavati's main image will be placed on the 7th day; against the north-western wall, a conical ustensil (*barma*) covered with a red cloth (*tul*) and a yak tail (*cavar*), representing Simha Bahini (9); against the south-western wall, four clay pitchers, *ghadaha* , covered with *pala* lamps embody the *nau durga* ; finally, as in any *dasai ghar* , a square of fresh earth is made in the eastern corner, where barley seeds are put to germinate to provide the *jamara* (sprouts) offered in most *puja* . As any householder, the Thakuri performs the *ghatasthapana* , "setting up of the pitchers", in the evening of the first day.

All these elements indicate that the room inhabited by the Thakuri represents his private space, opposed to the open courtyard where most public rites will be performed. The opposition is confirmed by the fact that the "Pandit" intervenes only inside, when other brahman priests, referred to as *pujari* , conduct the outdoor ceremonies.

So let's turn to the public sphere. Daily, in the early afternoon, two regular rites take place in the inner courtyard of the palace. They form the permanent network of the 15 days ceremonies. In both, the Thakuri is the central officiant.

The *postar* worship

The first rite, conducted in the north-eastern gallery, consists in the reading and celebration of sacred texts. The Thakuri performs a classical *puja* directed towards a book-stand, bearing the Devibhagavatpurana, the *postar* - which gives its name to the ceremony. Simultaneoulsy, parts of this text and parts of Candipath, Vedpath and Rudripath are read by seven Upadhya Bahun. In its conclusive part, the ceremony shows definitely a collective aspect when the whole attendance, including ordinary onlookers, take *bel* leaves to throw them towards the altar, are then sprinkled with sacred water (*jal*) by a *pujari* and finally receive *tika* in the following order: the Thakuri to each *pujari* , the *pujari* to common spectators. Thereafter, a long extract of the Devibhagavat corresponding to that specific day is read in Sankrit and then translated into Nepali.

The *mandap* worship

Here, the main officiant is also the Thakuri. The *mandap puja* however clearly displays tantric features and comes before a bloody sacrifice. Mandap refers to a square-shaped pavilion at the center of the courtyard. It is said to cover a deep pit inhabited by a terrible form of Kali. Each day a specific set of *rekhi* diagrams made of rice powder is drawn on its ground. It represents the form of the Goddess -along with associated divinities- worshipped that particular day. Obviously these images are contained within a *mandala* : the square is oriented by the adjunction of four "gates" (*parvesdvar*), made of *rekhi* , and its center is marked by a mast (*jhekri*) stuck into a mound. On this central mound adorned with four *trisul* , the image of Simha Bahini and the "great sword" of Argha (*jema khadka*) are placed, facing the south- west. As contents of this rite vary from one day to another, the Thakuri is carefully directed by a senior *pujari* reading the "Dasaikavidhi", a manual where the procedure is recorded in details. For the same reason we can only give the general sequence of the ceremony, as follows:

- the Thakuri purifies his body and mouth with sacred water, then sprinkles the altar with a bel leave (skt. *abhyuksana, acamana*) (10).

- keeps a few leaves in his right clenched fist and lets water slowly pour over a conch (nep. *sankha puja*).

- touches different parts of his body and places both hands opened upon his head (skt. *anganyasa*).

- throws uncooked rice (*aksata*) on the whole mandala.

- offers fumigation and "light" (nep. *dhupabatti*).

- offers bel leaves, flowers and barley sprouts to each parts of the *mandala* , including the "gates" (nep. *puja garne* , skt. *puspa*).

The Thakuri carries out each of these ritual gestures while pronouncing *mantra* and performing *mudra* . The worship ends with the sacrifice itself. The Thakuri splits a *kubhindo* (gourd) with the *jema khadka* and colours the inner part of the fruit with red powder (*abir*). Then he places the sword on the neck of a goat which is afterwrads beheaded , not by him however but by any assistant. The body of the animal is dragged around the *mandap* in a *pradaksina* , the head being deposed in front of *Simha Bahini*. Its blood is mixed with *aksata* to make the *tika* which are distributed to the audience, but also to the main image of Bhagavati in her nearby temple. Afterwards, all assistants take leave of the divinities by a *namaskar* (skt. *visarjana*).

Beyond these daily worships, the Thakuri officiates in specific ceremonies performed on certain days. I'll mention only those I consider to be the most significant in relation to our point.

In the afternoon of Saptami, the seventh day, Argha Bhagavati's main image is brought from her permanent sanctuary to the room where the Thakuri stays. It is said litterally that "she goes to war". This move actually refers to the battle fought by the Goddess against the Demons, and in the context of Argha Dasain it marks a dramatization of the ritual activities. It is worth noticing that from this day the distinction between indoor and outdoor rites becomes less obvious: from the instant Bhagavati -Argha's tutelar divinity- comes to "live" with and be daily worshipped by the Thakuri, several collective ceremonies are held within the "royal apartments".

First of all, late in the evening of Astami (8t day), i.e. during Kalaratri ("the dark night"), the decendants of the former king's *rajguru* , the Bhusal, perform their lineage cult (*kulpuja*) within the Thakuri's apartments (11). Their tutelar divinity (*kuldevta*), who in fact is considered as a different incarnation of Argha Bhagavati, is brought in procession from her permanent temple where one of the lineage member has worshipped her continuously from the first day of the festival (12). The Bhusal *kulpuja* consists in a complex sequence of offerings taking the form of *homa* , oblation to the fire. We will only underline here that besides three Bhusal *pujari* and an Upadhyay *purohit* , the Thakuri takes part to the offerings, which is noteworthy considering he is not a member of the *kul* . Concerning the ceremonies held that night, let's also briefly mention the setting up of four war standards, *alam* , in the inner courtyard. These flags, ordered by rank of age like sisters (*jethi* to *kanchi*), are considered as goddesses (*alam devi*) and worshipped daily till the end of Dasain (13).

The next morning, Navami, hundreds of villagers living within the territory of the ancient kingdom come to offer sacrifices to Argha Bhagavati. Goats are driven upwards to the inner room of the palace where the Thakuri himself beheads them, thus playing a somewhat different role in these sacrifices compared with that of the daily *mandap puja* .

Dasami (10th day) marks the climax of the Dasain's central period. This day's ritual amounts to a single ceremony held in the morning within the *mandap*. Before the *puja* , most high-*jat* inhabitants of the capital's borough bring leave plates, containing barley sprouts and rice mixed with curd, and lay them down on the pavilion perimeter. The *puja* performed by the Thakuri is quite simple compared with other days, but highly significant however. An assistant lights nine lamps at the southern corner. With his right hand, the Thakuri offers *dahi* (youghourt) and *jamara* (barley sprouts) to a *kalas* (pitcher) filled with water, *bel* leaves and *belauti* (guava). Simultaneously, as the main *pujari* makes him repeat a sequence of *mantra* , he takes *aksata* in his left hand and throws it violently behind him in the direction of a square containing a set of earthen figurines. These are said to represent the army of Mahisasur, the demon buffalo defeated by Durga on the tenth day. This particular gesture is called "striking at the enemies" (*vairi marne*) or "shooting the enemies" (*vairi hanne*). It is considered by all that a concrete power is involved here, as testified by the fact that everything is made to prevent anybody crossing the path of *aksata* . It is believed that "anyone standing here will die". Just after the *puja* is completed, the crowd rushes to get back his offerings and a general distribution of *tika* takes place, according to a simple rule: elders put it to the youngers, the Thakuri to all except the *pujari* of brahman status from whom he receives it (14).

Thus we see how the personal identity of the Thakuri as well as the general features of his participation in the ritual could obviously suggest he is assimilated to a royal character:

- he is a descendant of the former Argha Sahi raja.

- during the festival, he lives in the ancient palace with his servants.

- in most parts of the ritual itself, he plays the role of the sacrifiant.

Other elements however run contrary to this view and prevent us seeing him as a full fledged "king":

- he is not formally referred as a *raja* either by the official documents, which speak of an "agent" (*karta*), or by the individuals involved in the ceremonies who simply call him "Babu Saheb". Moreover, villagers do not manifest any specific marks of respect towards him.

- although generally acting as the "sacrifiant" (*yajman*), according to the classical model, the Thakuri sometime plays the "sacrifier" also, a task which, in the same model, goes to the brahman priests, the *rtvij* ; notwithstanding the instances when he just acts as the simple doer, the one who actually beheads the animal.

- his ritual function does not reflect his political status. He has no secular authority linked in a way or another to the royal sovereignty.

Thus, if one admits that Argha Dasain's Thakuri is a king, he is a "drama-king", or to be more accurate a "ritual king", displaying most religious features of a royal person but enjoying none of the minimal political attributes that define a sovereign. Such a dissociation between the ritual and the secular spheres is all the more striking because symbolism of the ceremonies is deeply expressive and moreover closely reflects the local tradition pertaining to the ancient kings: in the rites, the Thakuri is clearly displayed as a Devi adept whose devotion bring prosperity to the territory and its inhabitants. Now the foundation myth of the locality explicitly underlines that cults adressed to Argha Bhagavati, if correctly performed, protect the kingdom by ensuring victory over the enemies: "by performing the regular worship according to Ram Bhakta teachings (the first *rajguru*), enemies from the four directions were repelled" (15). And we saw in the description of Dasami how this assumption has to be understood literally: as the Thakuri worships with his right hand he strikes the enemies with the left one. Similarly, when the myth points a second personage as essential to the perpetuation of the cult, the *rajguru* , one ascertains how he remained in this position until today, with the present kin of Ram Bhakta performing their *kulpuja* in the palace itself, i.e. right at the symbolic core of the kingdom. On the other hand, unlike the Sahi, the Bhusal kept an actual preeminence in today's society, as chief priests in Bhagavati sanctuary of course, but also as one of the leading lineages of Argha Khanci.

Another broad interrogation arises from these datas. The symbolic pattern of Argha's Dasain is not odd at all. It fits with the general model of the Hindu sovereignty. The king's authority includes a magico-religious component, handed over by the divinity. With the close collaboration of the brahman priest -not necessary a mediation, in a tantric context (16) - the king regularly asks to the goddess the renewing of his power. Similarly, the exhibition of a royal character does not run contrary to the general logic of Dasain, being a broad process of national integration by religious means. As long as this ritual occurs in the framework of a *rajguthi* , one assumes that Argha's "king" acts in the name of the king of Nepal, the actual *yajman* . Argha's ritual king could also reasonably be considered as a "symbolic vassal" of Gorkha sovereigns. However in this context, it is far less understandable why similar ritual dramas are not played in all other historic principalities of the surroundings. The only case we know is

Musikot (Gulmi district), where the descendants of former Magar and Thakuri rulers are still officiating during Dasain - in a less dramatic manner however. In other words, how is it that among communities having experienced the same fate following the Gorkhali conquest of 1843VS, i.e. dismissal of their raja, only some of them kept the Thakuri as a central figure of the Dasain festival ? It has to be reminded that we are here in an altogether different context than the case of *rajauta*, these feudatory principalities whose rulers where permitted to stay on their throne, at least formally, after the conquest: in the Western Gandaki region, all local princes, as members of the so-called "Caubisi" coalition, militarily opposed the Gorkhali designs, and were therefore deprived of all powers.

Nevertheless, it seems to us that the existence of these ritual kings has more to do with political rather than cultural history - if these domains can be dissociated. Of course, Argha's Dasain shares certain particularities with most Dasain held in the surroundings, reflecting the cultural specificity of Gandaki region: for instance the worship of *alam* or the *sarae* dance (17). But the appearance of former king's descendants in the ritual itself is, as we just said, limited to some localities only, so that a culturalist explanation does not seem to be accurate. Therefore, only further studies concerning the local history, particularly the various processes of political integration of each principality, could shed light on the wide diversity of Dasain performances even within an area of such a limited extent as Gulmi and Argha Khanci districts.

Finally, we hope that the few ethnographic datas introduced in this brief paper will help to a better understanding of this essential festival. Contributions emanating from other researchers will certainly lead us, by broader comparisons, to enhance our understanding of the religion but also of the history of these still poorly known Thakuri principalities.

References

(1) - See Toffin, 1981, and Gutschow, 1982, on the Dasain among the Newar; Bennett, 1983, pp.136-141, has given a detailed account of the private ceremonies performed by the Bahun- Chetri of Kathmandu valley during this festival; Unbescheid, 1986, pp.8-25, and Pfaff, 1989, pp.167-169, dealt with its collective aspects in Gorkha and Nuvakot; concerning the Gurung, see Messerchmidt, 1976.

(2) - For an example in Tanahun district, see Gaborieau, 1978, pp.41-43. This practice, which formally disappeared with the removal of mukhiyas in 1962, was still maintained in some place however, the Pradan panc giving *tika* to the Panchayat inhabitants.

(3) - The same day, administrative movements were made public in a session called *pajani* . Another *tika* gift, from the Kumari to the King, which takes place not during Dasain but Indra Jatra, could be interpreted as completing the system at the paramount level (see Toffin, 1979, p.60).

(4) - These can take either the form of *phulpati* or simple *tika* (*aksata*).

(5) - Gaborieau, ibid .

(6) - Dasain is however only one of the numerous instances in which sovereignty is symbolically legitimated in Nepal: Cf. for example Toffin, 1979, Macdonald, 1987 or Bouillier, 1988.

(7) - I tried recently to introduce a discussion on these aspects: see the proceedings of the Franco-German seminar held in Arc-et- Senans, May 1990, G. Toffin (ed.), in print.

(8) - On the legal and economic aspects of the *guthi* system, see M.C. Regmi, 1968. In Argha, the *guthi* is managed by a committee of titulars, who report their accounts to the district tax office after each Dasain.

(9)- Identification of this "lion sister" (or "horned sister" ?), who appears only during Dasain, is still to be done.

(10) - The sankrit terms given here for different *upacana* are those found in the common litterature concerning either the "classical" *puja* or the *durgapuja* in its tantric form - one will notice that both traditions are intermixed here; nepali terms are those used during the ceremony. For a description of *durgapuja* according to the Kalikapurana see Van Kooij, 1972.

(11) - It has to be noticed that among Bahun-Chetri this is a rare example of a lineage cult being performed publicly. Only lineage members are admitted in most *kulpuja* , generally held in a specific sanctuary or inside the lineage founder's house.

(12) - A Bhusal officiant, called *guptabas* ("who stays concealed"), is cloistered during seven days and nights within the lineage temple and observes daytime fast. Generally a youngster, he is choosen from one lineage of the clan in Cait Dasain and from the other in Bada Dasain.

(13) - Unlike other *alam* with permanent sanctuaries, those of Argha are displayed only during Dasain.

(14) - This particular *tika-* giving ceremony seems to combine both principles of secular superiority (king over the people) and religious superiority (brahman over the sacrifiant).

(15) - *"Ram Bhakta guruka upades anusar ajapuja garda caraitira dusmanharu daman bhaeko thie"*.

(16) - We mean here that as long as the adept is entering directly in contact with the divinity, the role of the brahman is not an active one.

(17) - This dance, in which all *jat* take part in Navami, Dasami and Purnima, mimes the fight between Ram and Ravana, with the dancers brandishing old weapons - or anything more or less similar, like umbrellas and radio-cassettes ! -. It seems to be a specific custom of Western Gandaki.

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON A SHERPA PILGRIMAGE

The Pilgrimage to the Milk Lake in the District of Solu (Nepal)

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Introduction

The Sherpa community in Nepal comprises about 15000 people. They live for the most part in the eastern side of the country, in Solu, Pharak and Khumbu, but some of them are established also in the West, in Helambu (Tib.: Yol mo). It is believed that they left their original home, Khams, the eastern province of Tibet, about four centuries ago. After a long migration, which looks like a great pilgrimage, they arrived in Nepal. One may think that, maybe, they were looking for one of these lands hidden by Padmasambhava (Tib.:*sbas yul*), the tantrist saint who, according to tradition, introduced Buddhism in Tibet. Such places are conceived as refuges in times of dangers. They practise Mahayana Buddhism, belong to the Old School *(rnying ma pa)* , speak a Tibetan dialect and use Tibetan scripture.

Before the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Sherpas maintained many religious bonds with Tibet: most of the monks were trained in Khams as well as in the Tibetan monastery of Rongpuk (Dza rong phug) located at the foot of Mt Everest. The founder of Rongpuk, Nawang Tenzin Norbu (Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu), is regarded by the Sherpas as the reincarnation of Lama Sangwa Dorje (gSang ba rdo rje).

According to tradition, the latter possessed extraordinary powers and was at the origin of the development of Buddhism in the Sherpa country. It is said that he could fly in the sky and spread his coat on a ray of light (Fürer-Haimendorf 1980: 162).

At that time, many Sherpas went on pilgrimages in Tibet, to the temples and monasteries of Lhasa and Shigatse as well as around different sacred mountains: to Tsari (Tsa ri), one of the most important pilgrimage sites located in the south-eastern part of Tibet; to Tsibri (rTsib ri) in the south of Tibet; and to Kailash, in the west. They used to circumambulate the sacred mountains like the Tibetans, whereas in Nepal they never circumambulate mountains although they regard them as very important divinities.

The circumambulation of sacred mountains seems to be a Buddhist phenomenon. In Tibet, during the rituals to the sacred mountains which go back to very old times, men (the women are never allowed to perform these rituals) will go to the foot of the mountain but will never circumambulate it.

When Buddhism transforms a sacred mountain to a Buddhist one (Tib.: *gnas ri*), it uses scripture. Following a vision or a dream, a lama or saint one day "discovers" the pilgrimage site and writes a guide about it. In the same way, when the time is appropriate, a suitable individual opens the doors of the hidden land *(sbas yul*).

In that way, a place is transformed into a sacred Buddhist site. The text presents the landscape as a *mandala* and inserts the Buddhist pantheon within the space. According to Mumford (1990: 87), "The Buddhist text displaces the pre-Buddhist local god names, and provides instead universal categories". Only then is the pilgrimage road "opened". Progressively, the sacred site is delimited, in a very concrete way, by monasteries, prints of buddha and bodhisattva and caves where Buddhist saints stayed. The presence of these high religious people help the consecration of the place.

Nowadays, the Sherpas still perform many pilgrimages : to the traditional Buddhist sacred places of India and, in Nepal, to the Kathmandu Valley, and to Halase-Maratika, caves situated in the Khotang District, where Padmasambhava is believed to have obtained immortality. They also visit certain lakes.

In fact, in the Tibetan tradition the sacred place is characterised by the association of a god (mountain or rock) with a goddess (lake or spring), the mountain being regarded as the husband and the lake as the wife. The mountain also represents the sky and its gods; the lake, the underground world and the aquatic divinities (Tib.: *klu*) (Stein 1981:185). So one finds the traditional order of the world : the upper part associated with the upper gods, the medium part with men and the lower part with the divinities of the underground world and the waters.

The milk lake (2) (Nep.: *Dudh Kunda*; Tib.:'*O ma mtsho*), located in the district of Solu, is one of these lakes which every year attract quite a good number of pilgrims. This article will give a description of this pilgrimage and will try to bring out themes common to other pilgrimages and the questions that arise from the observation.

The milk lake: Oma tso (Tib.: 'O ma mtsho).

This lake is located one and a half days' walk north of the village of Junbesi, at the foot of the sacred mountain, the local god *(yul lha)* of Solu, called Numbur in Nepali and Tashi Pelboche in Tibetan *(bKra shis dpal po che)*. The couple formed by this mountain and lake, has a child : Kumbila (Tib.: *Khumbu 'i yul lha*), the sacred mountain of Khumbu.

This lake is one of the residences of an aquatic divinity (Skt.: *nagi* ; Tib.: *klu mo)* which bears the name of Lumo karmo (Tib · *klu mo dkar mo*) or Tsomen dung kyongma (Tib.: *mTsho sman dung skyong ma* : lake goddess protective conch). Usually, this divinity stays in Junbesi. According to local tradition, when the Sherpas arrived in Junbesi, there was no *klu* . A lama called Dorje Zangpo (Tib.: *rDo rje bzang po*) went back to Khams to fetch one. Because the *klu* came from a cold place, the lama offered her two places to stay. In winter, while she is sleeping, she stays in a spring in Junbesi, but in summer, when the warmth comes, she goes up the mountain, to a place called Lumitang (Tib: *klu mi steng ?*), where Sherpa nomads perform the summer ritual to the local god. According to the villagers, old people said that in the past, on the departure of Lumo karmo, a loud noise could be heard but that nowadays, because there are too many defilements (Tib.: *sgrib*) in the village, the *klu - mo* goes away without making any noise. This departure could indicate the division of the year into two major periods (3).

Lumo karmo did agree to come to the Sherpa country provided that Dorje Zangpo would always stay close by her. To be faithful to this promise, when the lama died, the relics of this monk were placed in a stupa built close to the spring where Lumo karmo resides.

Different explanations justify the name "the milk lake". Some people attribute it to the fact that Lumo karmo, like all the *klu*, accepts as offerings only pure white food : milk, butter and cheese. Others say that the name is derived from the lake's whitish colour and to the belief that this lake was really full of milk in the past.

One tradition says that Padmasambhava and his consort Yeshe Tsogyel (Tib · *Ye shes mtsho rgyal*) one day came to Oma tso. At that time the lake was already there and was pure and warm (4). The surrounding landscape was covered with ice. The saint and his consort took a bath. Many *dakini* came and joined them. Then the lake lost its purity, which disturbed Padmasambhava. He decided to have another bath, and while climbing the hill above the lake, came to a rock which he hit with his trident, causing a spring to spurt out. Because the *dakini* were happy to have taken this bath with Padmasambhava, they started dancing on a rock which to this day bears the name of *mkhá 'gro'cham* (the *dakini's* dance).

Before going on pilgrimage, all pilgrims must perform a special ritual called *kangsur* by the Sherpas (Tib.: *bskang gso* aimed at fulfilling -the wishes of the divinities- and revitalizing -links with them). It is carried out by a village lama who is invited to various households. Purified by this ritual, pilgrims can perform their ablutions in the lake, and thus avoid offending the divinity. During the ceremony, sacrificial cakes (Tib.: *gtor ma*) are prepared and the summoned divinities come to stay for as long as the ritual is performed. The goddess of the lake, the local god and his attendants are represented. This ritual has to be performed from the first Tibetan month, when Lumo karmo, the white *nagi*, starts to wake up. Doing it before would disturb her and provoke her into sending some sickness.

The pilgrimage

The pilgrimage to Oma tso, like the one to Gosainkunda, north of Kathmandu, occurs on the day of Janai purnima (Macdonald 1984:297-308. Gaborieau 1982:11-29) which, in 1991, fell on the 25th of August.

About twenty people from Junbesi, all young, decided to perform this pilgrimage. They constituted two distinct groups because, during the political elections which took place in May the same year, some of them voted for the Congress Party and others for the Communists. A lot of stormy discussions followed and many friendships were broken.

This pilgrimage attracts Sherpa people but also other communities, although to a lesser extent: Rais, Tamangs, Limbus and the upper *jats* who wear the sacred thread and come to change it on the day of Janai Purnima (Gaborieau 1982:15). There were very few old Sherpa people and besides some Buddhist nuns, no Buddhist religious figures were involved. A good many *jhākri* (5) were also present.

The pilgrims came in groups based on locality but not on ethnic affiliation.

According to the Sherpas, one must perform this pilgrimage once or three, seven, nine or twelve times.

Just before Oma tso, there is a small lake, called the demon-lake (Tib.: *bDud kyi mtsho*) hidden behind a rocky promontory. People says that if it is of no consequence to see it on the way up, it is not the same going down. All the Sherpas agree that the *bdud* demon will arrange it so that people's requests will not be fulfilled if they see the lake during the descent.

The 24th of August

All the pilgrims arrived at Oma tsho on the eve of Janai purnima (in 1991, the 24th of August).

The temporary shelters of the nomads were used as hotels and restaurants. Each group of pilgrims stayed together and the whole night was spent singing and dancing : the music consisted of traditional songs but also pop music and modern dances, mainly by Sherpa people from different places.

It was a night of entertainment.

The 25th of August

On this day, at five o'clock in the morning, before eating or drinking anything, all the pilgrims went to the lake to purify themselves and make offerings of milk, curd, fruits, flowers and lamps. Then, always in groups, they started the circumambulation of the lake, stopping at every sacred place.

The Sherpas perform the pilgrimage to this lake to request the following: children, cattle, money, sometimes long life, good harvest and a husband or wife. A special place is dedicated to each request.

The pilgrims started by walking along the shore of the lake, all going clockwise. Before reaching the other shore, the Sherpas climbed north over loose stones, until they reached another lake, located above Oma tso, where those who want asked for a spouse. Then they made their way east, still walking on the hillside, and reached three springs. Two are situated side by side, the third almost in front. At the first two, the pilgrims drank water and collected some in a receptacle to take back home; at the last one, they threw some grains in the air, corn or rice, asking for a good harvest. Later, they went further east, to a place still overhanging the lake, where a pool of water stood in the hollow of a rock. There it is possible to make a vow to obtain cattle and money. It is in this place (called in Tibetan *mkha' 'gro 'cham*) that the *dakini* long ago performed a dance, and as a reminder of this day the Sherpas dance also. Going downwards, the pilgrims stopped near a recess in the rock where they express the wish for long life. Close by the lake, not far from the starting point, there is a place where one can request a child.

Asking for children, money or cattle is done as follows: a couple who want a child must come together in a special place near the lake where they perform a fumigation and a short meditation. Sometimes the couple bring a cradle. After that either the man or the woman puts a hand in the lake and picks up what he or she finds (usually a stone). If they want a son, the prospective parent must say at that time: "this is my son". Then, without looking, he or she wraps it in clean material, puts it in the cradle (if there is a cradle) and, back at home, deposits it in a pure and safe place. When the child is born, it is essential to bring him back to the lake, present him to the divinity and thank her. On the other hand, it is necessary to keep at home the stone that was picked up in the lake, because it is the "soul-stone" (Tib.: *bla rdo)* of the child.

To ask for money, the visitor should put his hand in the pool of water at the place called *mkha' 'gro 'cham*, and take what he finds while requesting money.

Whoever wants cattle brings a rope from his home. Arriving at the place where the *dakini* danced, he ties a stone to the rope and leads it as if it were a buffalo, saying: "come, cattle, come".

The *jhakri* were performing the ritual tour to the sound of drums. They say they come to acquire more power, and all agree that after the pilgrimage their cures are more effective.

The requests of the Hindus are similar to those of the Sherpas. Those I spoke with asked for children and a good harvest. Then, sitting on the shore of the lake, they changed their sacred thread.

Two hours are necessary to go around the lake. As soon as the circumambulation was completed, the pilgrims started off again for their village.

By two o'clock in the afternoon, there was no one left and even the nomads, who had transformed their temporary shelters into hotels for the pilgrimage, packed up.

The lake recovered its peaceful atmosphere.

Conclusion

The description of the pilgrimage to Oma tso raises certain questions in relation to the features it shares with other pilgrimages in the Tibetan area.

The themes

Lama Dorje Zangpo is one of the leading religious figures of the Sherpa tradition. When Buddhism came to the Sherpa country, a conflict brought together two lamas: Lama Dorje Zangpo and Lama Gonpa (dGon pa) fought to gain religious supremacy and the fight ended with the victory of Lama Dorje Zangpo (Macdonald 1987 : 70-73). It was a time when lamas were very powerful: they could speak with divinities, fly in the air and go underground. Nothing was impossible for those who had the appropriate powers. This time has passed. We are now in an era of degeneration. The power of practitioners is no more what it used to be, and even the noise Lumo Karmo makes when she departs is no more perceptible to a human ear because of the many defilements in the village. This idea of cyclical periods connected with the propagation or the deterioration of the religion was in existence in very old times (Macdonald 1971:362).

The theme of an evil lake inhabited by demon and located close to a beneficial lake is also a recurrent feature. There is one near Gokyo lake and one near the lake of Lumding, in Parak.

In Halase-Maratika, it is not a question of lakes but of cave : one, called "the demon-cave" (tib: *bDud kyi phug*) is the one in which, according to tradition, Padmasambhava fought a demoness and killed her by cutting off her head. Some rocky concretions represent the head, the heart, the entrails, the blood of this demoness and remind the pilgrim of this episode in the life of the great saint. In the other cave, Padmasambhava obtained immortality and an immortality vessel (Tib: *tshe bum*), a very big circular rock, stands there to testify it.

Berglie (1980 : 40) indicates that mediums (Tib.: *dpa' bo)* have to perform a pilgrimage to Mt.Targo, in the western part of Tibet. According to a local tradition, Mt.Targo as the father and lake Dangra as the mother are the ancestors of the world. This sacred site includes two caves. The medium has to enter the bigger one to test his own capacities (this visit is necessary not only for the medium himself but also for his clients). The smaller cave, counterpart of the first one, is reserved for mediums possessed by demon.

The theme of the opposition between an evil black side and a beneficial white one is found also in the Tibetan epic of Gesar of Gling (Stein 1959 : 446) where we witness a fight between two mountains which appeared in the guise of a white yak fighting a black one. The white yak wins in the morning; at noon, the two opponents are equal in points, and in the afternoon it is the black yak's turn to win. Thanks to the intervention of the hero, the victory eventually returns to the white yak. It is the struggle of the god of the sky against the demon.

The questions

The first problem would be to understand why the Sherpa people do not circumambulate sacred mountains. An impossibility due to the configuration of the landscape could be the answer. However, using the example of the pilgrimage of Kong po Bon Ri, south-east Tibet, S.G.Karmay (6) has shown that the circumambulation of a sacred mountain can sometimes become a tour going over the west, south and east slopes, avoiding the summit. Could the circumambulation the Sherpa perform around the lakes be a substitute for the one of the sacred mountains ?

The requests the Sherpas make during the pilgrimage to Oma tso are of a wordly nature : money, cattle, children or long life. Before the pilgrimage, the pilgrims ask for a ritual to be performed in which some divinities of the mundane plane are summoned including the lake's divinity. They make offerings to please them and fulfill their wishes and also to create a relationship of reciprocity and obligation with the *numina*: "I am offering you (the gods) the things which you eat, now you must do whatever I demand" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1964:193).

We have seen that before requesting a child the couple has to perform a fumigation. Generally, this cult is typical of the local god (*yul lha*). Does this mean that, before asking something to the aquatic divinity, the pilgrim has to honour the local god ? In the country of Sharwa people, in Amdo, eastern Tibet, "Quand les *klu* sont en colère, c'est le *yul lha* qu'on invoque pour arranger les choses. Car de son bon vouloir de maître du sol (*gzhi bdag*) dépend l'attitude de tous les autres dieux sur lesquels il exerce son empire" (Karmay & Sagant 1987: 251).

Religious people are not involved in this pilgrimage because, as they say themselves : "We don't need children, money or cattle". Some nuns were present but only to see the place.

Assuming this to be the case, one may wonder whether the pilgrimage to Oma tso is still in the Buddhist tradition. Paraphrasing A.W Macdonald(1987:73), I would answer "Yes, it is Buddhism, but only one facet of that very complex religion". In the same manner, E. Kawaguchi(1979:173), doing a pilgrimage around Mt.Kailash, in Western Tibet, met a Tibetan from Khams who worshipped the mountain and spoke to her in these terms:"O Saint Kang Rinpoche ! O great Sakyammuni! O all buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten quarters of the world and in the time past, present and future ! I have been wicked in the past. I have murdered a number of men. I have taken a great deal that did not belong to me. I have robbed husbands of their wives. I have quarrelled ever so many times, and I have also thrashed people. Of all these sins I repent and so I solemnly perform my penance here on this hill for them. I believe that by this act of confession and repentance, I have been absolved from those sins. I also perform here penance for my prospective sins, for I may in future repeat them, may rob people of their goods and wives, or thrash and beat them."

References

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(2) - For many informants, *dudh kunda* means: "the milk lake" but in L. Renou: *Dictionnaire sanskrit-francais*, Maisonneuve, Paris,1932 : 197, we read: *"kunda:* pot, bol, jarre, fosse ronde dans le sol (pour l'eau, pour le feu); bassin, pièce d'eau (surtout pour des emplois religieux)..."

(3) - For exemple, the Limbus make the distinction between two seasons: the "upward" season (from February to August) and the "downward" season (from August to February) (Sagant 1967: 11). In Tarap,the year is divided in two period: one from October to April which is the winter time, and the second one from May to September, the summer time (Jest 1974 : 143)

(4) - It is interesting to notice that the lake is said to have been warm if one thinks that one of the meanings of *kunda* is round pit made in the ground for the fire.

(5) - A *jhākri* is "a person who falls into a transe, during which time voices speak through his person, thereby enabling him to diagnose illnesses and sometimes cure them, give advice for the future and clarify present events in terms of their relationship to the past. He is therefore both a privileged intermediary between spirits and men" (Macdonald 1987 : 22). The *jhākri* can be a man or a woman and is in charge of the extraordinary ritual.

(6) - Cf.S.G.Karmay:"A Pilgrimage to Kong po Bon Ri" in *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the fifth Seminar on Tibetan Studies*, Narita, Japan, 1992 : 527-540.

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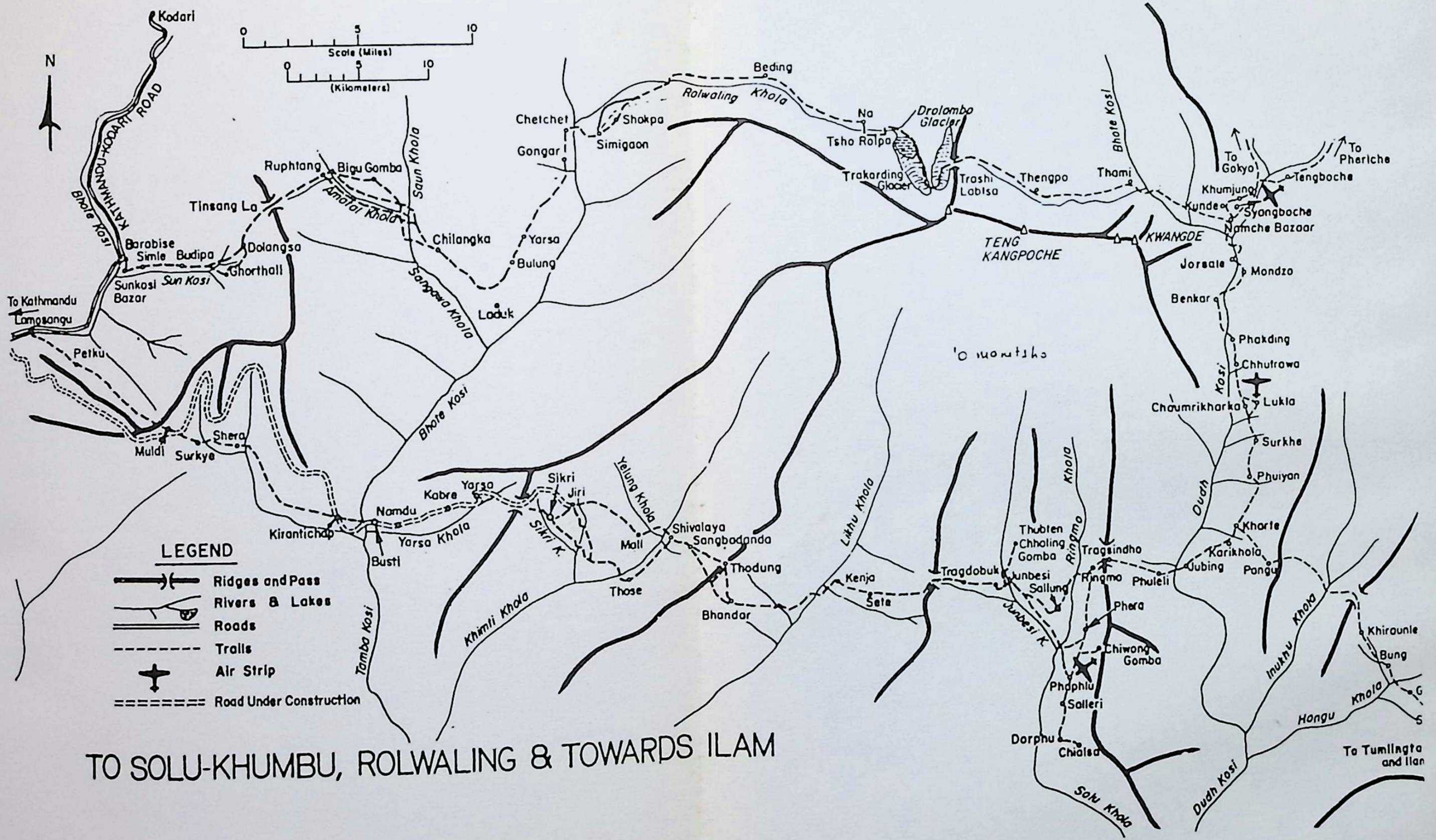
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Saun Khola
Chilangka
Sangawa Khola
Laduk
Chetchet
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Trakarding Glacier
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TENG KANGPOCHE
KWANGDE
Jorsale
Mondzo
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To Kathmandu
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Ringmo Khola
Tragsindho
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Sallung
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Junbesi K.
Chiwong Gomba
Phaphlu
Salleri
Dorphu
Chialsa
Solu Khola
Dudh Kosi
Hongu Khola
Inukhu Khola
Khiraunle
Bung
To Tumlingta and Ilan
Tamba Kosi
Khimti Khola
LEGEND
Ridges and Pass
Rivers & Lakes
Roads
Trails
Air Strip
Road Under Construction

TO SOLU-KHUMBU, ROLWALING & TOWARDS ILAM

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CHANGE
AND
DEVELOPMENT

A RECENT PHENOMENON: THE EMERGENCE OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES AROUND THE STUPA OF BODNATH.

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As it is well known, the presence of Buddhism in Nepal goes back to a very ancient past, even if, along the centuries, Hinduism has become the dominant religious trend in the Himalayan area. In the Kathmandu valley numerous traces of this Buddhist influence are materialized by *stupas* , sculptures and paintings. Though the monastic life has practically disappeared in their community, many Newars are still fervent Buddhists and have kept firmly established religious practices (Gellner 1991). Along the northern borderland of Nepal, in the areas of Dolpo, Mustang, Yolmo, among the Sherpa, Tamang, Thakali and other ethnic minorities, constant relations with the Tibetan monasteries have been maintained till the Chinese invasion; and most of the monks were receiving their religious training in Tibet (Snellgrove 1957).

A more than thousand years old Tibetan tradition tells that Guru Padmasambhava, as he was on his way to Tibet to subdue the demons rebelling against the building of the monastery of Bsam-yas (circa 779 A.D.), stopped in the Kathmandu Valley. According to his legendary biography, written several centuries later (Toussaint 1979, for a French translation of the *Padma bka'-thang,* and Blondeau 1971, for a French translation of the *Lha-'dre bka'-thang),* this patron saint of Tibetan Buddhism would have practiced meditation at Yang-le-shod -i.e. Pharping- for three years; he would have visited a great number of places in Nepal where he would have buried numerous texts (*gter-ma*) to be discovered in the future (Toussaint 1979:241); he would have made offerings at the stupa of Bya-rung kha-shor -i.e. the present Bodnath- (Blondeau 1971:57). The Lady Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, the most famous of Padmasambhava's consorts, is supposed to have offered a handful of golden dust to the stupa (Dowman 1984:47); and according to the legend of origin of the stupa, Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal herself would have written and buried the text of the legend which was discovered the first time in the 13th century, then was buried again and finally rediscovered and published in the 15th century (Dowman 1978). In this paper I shall concentrate on the recent extraordinary development of religious activities around the stupa of Bodnath.

If we leave out those legendary sources, we must recognize that there is no historical evidence concerning the date at which the stupa was built; nevertheless it seems that for the last centuries, Bodnath/Bauddha has been one of the main places that Tibetan pilgrims have visited on the way to the holy sites of Buddhism in India (Dowman 1981).

On iconographic material going back to the beginning of the 19th century, the stupa of Bodnath appears isolated in the countryside, with a few houses in the vicinity; it is only at the end of the 19th century that the circulary surroundings that we see today started to emerge (Ehrhard 1991:9,11,15). At that time, not a single testimony of monastic life is evident around the stupa, and from the beginning of the 20th century up to the fifties the temple *(lha-khang)* committed to the Chini Lama was the only place of Buddhist establishment. (Monastery n°1)

The situation changes radically with the afflux of Tibetan refugees fleeing the Chinese invasion; many monks and religious authorities of Tibetan Buddhism, on the road to exile, stop in Nepal for obvious economic and practical reasons. The stupa of Bodnath, already well known to pilgrims and merchants on the commercial road between Lhasa and Kathmandu, has become a rallying point for the Tibetan Buddhists in Nepal. Without trying to be exhaustive, since the situation is changing day by day, I shall give a list of the main monasteries built since 1959. I shall use my own observations gathered during various periods of fieldwork conducted in 1984, 1989, 1991, 1992, as well as the material published by two European anthropologists who have been among the first to work in Nepal, I mean my colleagues Ch. von Fürer-Haimendorf and Corneille Jest. When, in *The Renaissance of Tibetan Civilization,* Fürer-Haimendorf analyzes the situation of the Tibetan monasteries from 1959 to 1985, he notes the existence of six monasteries in the vicinity of the stupa (Fürer-Haimendorf 1990:103-107). For the same period, Corneille Jest, in a paper given at the Bicentenary Csoma de Koros Symposium (Visegrad- Budapest 1984), mentions twelve religious foundations.

A chronological approach of the building of the monasteries *(dgon-pa)* will give an idea of this ongoing development:

1959- A Mongolian Lama who came in Nepal in the 1950s built a house which, after various extensions, greeted an important group of Dge-lugs-pa monks. Since 1985 this monastery (Monastery n°2), known as *Bsam-gtan gling* is ruled conjointly by the monasteries of Sera, Bras-spung and Dga'-ldan, via Mundgod in India.

1964- The monastery identified Kargon-tine chunkorle gonpa by Fürer-Haimendorf and more properly mentioned by Jest as *Phrin-las chos-'khor gling* (Monastery n°3) was built by Zla-bzang Rinpoche (for a picture of him, see Douglas and White: 175) from the Bka'-brgyud-pa monastery of Dil-yag dgon-pa near Nang-chen (Khams); it has been extended later and the new monastery of *Dil-yag E-vam dpal-ris bkra-shis mi-'gyur rdo-rje rgyal-mtshan gling* (Monastery n°4) was built in 1983.

1969- The monastery identified Tshechen Schedupling gonpa (=Tshechen ? bshad-sgrub gling dgon-pa) by Fürer-Haimendorf, but better known as *Sa-skya dgon-pa* , (Monastery n°5) was built by Lta-rig Rinpoche who, with seven of his monks, also came from Nang-chen area in Khams. The monastery has been extended in 1970. It represents the Ngor-pa branch of the Sa-skya school and is very active.

1971- *Bka'-rnying bshad-sgrub gling* (Monastery n°6) is an imposing white monastery located at the north of the stupa. Its distinctive feature is that it combines two traditions: the Bka'-brgyud-pa one and the Rnying-ma-pa one. It was founded by O-rgyan sprul-sku, from Mchog-gyur gling-pa (1829-1870)'s lineage. Most of the time O-rgyan sprul-sku stays at the hermitage of Nagi dgon-pa, while his two sons, Chos kyi nyi-ma (a reincarnate lama of the 'Bri-gung bka'-brgyud-pa tradition) and Lung-rtog rgya-mtsho (Orgyen Tobgyal 1988: 43-45) take care of the monastery and have numerous disciples.

1976-*Bkra-shis chos-'phel-gling*, (Monastery n°7) a 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa foundation, has been built by Thrangu (= Khra-'gu) Rinpoche (photo in Douglas and White: 175) who with some disciples came from Jyekundo via Lhasa and Bhutan.

1976- *O-rgyan mdo-sngags chos-'khor gling* (Monastery n°8)has been enlarged in 1987 in order to receive the stupa prepared for His Holiness Bdud-'joms Rinpoche's relics. Bdud-'joms Rinpoche (1903-1987), the head Lama of the Rnying-ma-pa school, died in France and his relics (tib. *sku-gdung*) were brought back to Bodnath with great pomp in 1989. This is where nowadays the great Rnying-ma-pa scholar Mkhas-btsun bzang-po resides regularly as the head of a Lama College there.

1981- *Bco-brgyad khri-chen dgon-pa* (Monastery n°9), also known as Byams-pa'i lha-Khang, located in the immediate neighbourhood of Bodnath stupa, is a foundation of the Tshar-pa branch of the Sa-skya-pa school. The monastery was consecrated in 1985 by H.H. the Sa-skya khri-'dzin.

1983-85- *Zhe-chen bstan-gnyis dar-rgyas-gling* (Monastery n°10) also known as "Khyentse Rinpoche's Monastery" or as the "Bhutanese monastery", was built by H. H. Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche (1910-1991), a recognized scholar who, after H.H. Bdud-joms Rinpoche's death was considered the supreme authority of the Rnying-ma-pa lineage. The main building is modelled on the Tibetan monastery of the same name founded in 1735; besides a vast prayer-room on the ground floor, it includes the Protectors' chapel (*mgon- khang*) , the quarters for the monastery's religious authorities, and a library of Tibetan books. To the main building and to the monks quarters have been added first a separate chapel (completed in 1990)-devoted to Padmasambhava and his 25 main disciples- in the northern part of the compound and later eight big stupas (consecrated by 'Khrul- zhig Rinpoche in 1991) and prayer-wheels on the western side of the main building. The elaborate decoration of the building as well as the making of more than 300 statues are due to Bhutanese artists. Rab-'byams Rinpoche Chos kyi seng- ge (born in 1965), H.H. Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche's grandson, recognized as the seventh reincarnation of the founder of the Zhe-chen Tibetan monastery was entrusted with the ruling of the monastery.

Among the other foundations and monasteries of the last five years in the area one can mention:

- *Dpal-ldan thub-bstan nges-don bshad-sgrub dar-rgyas gling* (Monastery n°11) a recent Bka'-brgyud-pa monastery, in the immediate vicinity of Dil-yag E-vam dpal-ri bkra-shis mi-'gyur rdo-rje rgyal- mtshan gling at the east.

- *Gnas-nang Dpa'-bo Rinpoche's monastery* (Monastery n°12) of which the proper name is unknown. It has been the residence of Dpa'-bo Rinpoche (1912-1991), the 10th of the lineage of the Dpa'-bo sprul-sku (Douglas and White: 170), a recognized figure of Bka'-brgyud-pa school. Its newly painted facade appears behind O-rgyan sprul-sku's monastery.

- *Bairo (most probably=Be-ru) Mkhyen-rtse Rinpoche's Monastery* (Monastery n°13), Karma Tharjay (sic) chos-'khor gling by name, was recently completed and is intended to be the residence for the head of the Karma bka '-brgyud school when he visits Nepal.

- The so called *Pad-nor Rinpoche's Monastery* (Monastery n°14) is the usual residence of this recognized authority of the Rnying-ma-pa school.

- *Thar-lam grwa-tshang rnam-rgyal gling* (Monastery n°15), the third Sa-skya-pa monastery in the area, planned by Sde-zhung Rinpoche who died recently, already mentioned by Ch.von Fürer-Haimendorf and Corneille Jest, was not yet completed in 1992; some monks and novices were performing rituals in a small building nearby.

- An important Sherpa foundation (Monastery n°16), initiated in 1983, on the road coming from Kathmandu, is now very active. A residence for 'Khrul-zhig Rinpoche was built near of it.

It is still impossible to determine the exact number of all these foundations to which one must add residences for the Lamas, centres of teaching for European disciples (such as the Bka'-brgyud-pa Marpa Institute) ... which were established in Bodnath and which play their part in the revival of Tibetan Buddhism not only in Nepal but also all over the world.

One thing is certain: paralell to the urbanization of the area, more than a dozen monasteries have been built around the stupa of Bodnath. Although all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism are represented, the Rnying-ma-pa and the Bka'-brgyud-pa monasteries are the biggest and the most numerous.

The spiritual influence of the last two head lamas of the Rnying-ma-pa school -H.H.Bdud'-joms Rinpoche and H.H.Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche- has probably been determinant during the last decade since their presence has attracted an ever growing number of young monks and disciples. 'Khrul-zhig Rinpoche, an outstanding disciple of these two prestigious figures of Rnying-ma-pa school is famous in Nepal where he has been playing an eminent part in the revival of Buddhism in Sherpa area. With the presence of O-rgyan sprul-sku at the Nagi Dgon-pa with the frequent visits of Pad-nor Rinpoche, coming from his Dpal-yul monastery in India, Bodnath stands out henceforth as one of the main rallying centers for the Rnying-ma-pa school.

Those new monasteries are well kept up thanks to the funds collected by the monks or to the generous donations provided not only by the royal family of Bhutan or some well to do Nepalese and Tibetan families, but by Buddhist devotees from the Western World, from Taiwan or Malaysia. All along the last thirty years the monastic communities have been steadily increasing. The many young monks come from the Tibetan refugee families, from Bhutan, from the border areas of Nepal and even from the Tibetan Autonomous Region and from various parts of China. Besides the maintenance of their own liturgical traditions, the monasteries have also to provide a proper teaching for all those new young monks.

Let us return now to the conditions in which the liturgical traditions are presently transmitted to the Nepalese Zhe-chen. The buildings were completed in 1983-84; in 1985, H.H.Dil-go Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche and Rab-'byams Rinpoche could visit the Zhe-chen monastery of Tibet and bring back in Nepal books and manuscripts dealing with various rituals traditionally performed in the monastery. They also invited an old precentor (tib . *dbu-mdzad*) of the Tibetan Zhe-chen who could teach the monks in Bodnath.

In 1987, Rab-'byams Rinpoche whom I met in India drew my attention to the specificity of musical traditions of Zhe- chen and I was interested in studying the renewal of those traditions in the situation in exile. It is the reason why, since 1989, I visited regularly the monastery of Zhe-chen which counts 150 monks and students and where, thanks to Rab-'byams Rinpoche's kindness, I have been able to observe and partially record three of the most important rituals performed in Zhe-chen around the Tibetan New Year *(lo-sar)* i.e.:

- the big exorcism *gtor-zlog* performed from the 22d to the 29th day of the 12th Tibetan month.

- the tantric ritual of "great realization" *(sgrub-chen)* of the *Tshogs-chen 'dus-pa* regularly performed at the beginning of the 1st Tibetan month.

- the *sgrub-chen* concerning Vajrasattva performed according the tradition of the famous Rnying-ma-pa monastery of Smin-grol-gling.

The performing of the rituals involves not only the knowledge of the texts used (which can be common to various monasteries or traditions), but also liturgical and musical competences. This knowledge is orally transmitted by the various *dbu-mzdad* of one peculiar tradition and has sometimes been written down.

In the case of the *gtor-zlog* as it is performed in Zhe-chen, most of the ritual texts are issued from a "hidden text" (*gter-ma)* discovered by Gter-bdag gling-pa, the founder of Smin-grol-gling and later included in the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod* compiled at the end of the 19th century, and reedited in 135 volumes by H.H.Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche in 1974. According to the informations I could collect in 1989, 1991 and 1992, the sequence of the texts to be used concerns:

- The lineage of the transmission of the ritual *(brgyud- 'debs)* (1 fol.)

- The list of actions (*las-byang*) to be carried out concerning a form of Yamantaka, the so-called 'Jam-dpal Gshin-rje-gshed dregs-pa 'joms-byed, the tutelar deity of the monastery.

- The text dealing with the rituals actions performed during the "liberation" of the linga (short title: *Zor-phrin*).

Those texts dealing with Yamantaka are completed by the atonement ritual (*bskang-gso*) to the protectors of the Buddhist faith *(bstan-srung)*, used also during the Mani Rimdu performance and called "The Playful Ocean of True Achievment, the Ceremony for the Great Sworn Defenders of the Faith" (Kohn 1988:561-837).

All those texts cannot be used without the *lag-len* , a manuscript manual in which the "directions for the use" are kept. This *lag-len* is now available at Bodnath and is the constant reference. It is completed by technical manuals concerning the musical aspect of the ritual: (1) two manuals of notations for the vocalized chanting of the *dbyangs*: one devoted to the Yamantaka part of the ritual (62fol.) and one concerning the *bskang-ba* of the Protectors (80fol.); (2) one manual of notations for the playing of long trumpets *dung-chen* and short trumpets *rkang-gling*. A detailed analysis of the contents of these last texts is outside the scope of this paper, but it is worth underlining how exceptional it is to have at one's disposal the complete range of texts needed for one specific ritual.

The imposant set of musical insruments which is required is provided by the monastery itself and includes:

dril-bu bells and small *damaru* hand-drums

2 big drums (*mchod-rnga*)

16 pole drums (*lag-rnga*) used mainly for the part of the ritual devoted to the Protectors

2 pairs of cymbals of the *sbug-chal* type (i.e. with a big central boss) played by the *dbu-mdzad*

1 pair of cymbals of the *sil-snyan* type (i.e. with a small boss)

3 pairs of long telescopic trumpets (*dung-chen*): the long ones (more than 3 m. long), the middle ones (about 2,40 m.long), the short ones (about 1,70 m. long) used during the processions which accompany the ritual in and out the monastery.

1 pair of oboes (*rgya-gling*)

1 pair of short trumpets in metal (*rkang-gling*)

1 pair of conches (*dung-dkar*)

In accordance with H.H.Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche's wishes, and thanks to the manuscripts available and the training provided by the first Zhe-chen *dbu-mdzad*, and by another talented *dbu-mdzad* who arrived from Tibet in 1989, the ritual performance of the *gtor-zlog* keeps improving and is probably as close as possible to the original tradition. The fact that, in 1989 and 1991, Rab-'byams Rinpoche, the head of the monastery, acted as the spiritual leader (*rdo-rje slob-dpon*) and played the part of the main "Black hat" (*zhwa-nag*) for the ritual is a guarantee of the authenticity of the performance; in 1992, as he was in Bhutan, his role was played by another *sprul-sku* of the monastery.

At festivals, Buddhists from the Valley, Tibetans, Sherpas and Tamang pilgrims, as well as various Buddhists coming from abroad (by example from Taiwan), and even some Hindus, come to the monastery and bring offerings. The visit to the monasteries where they can get the blessings of the Rinpoches has become an important part of the pilgrimage to Bodnath, as it can easily be seen at Zhe-chen and in the other monasteries.

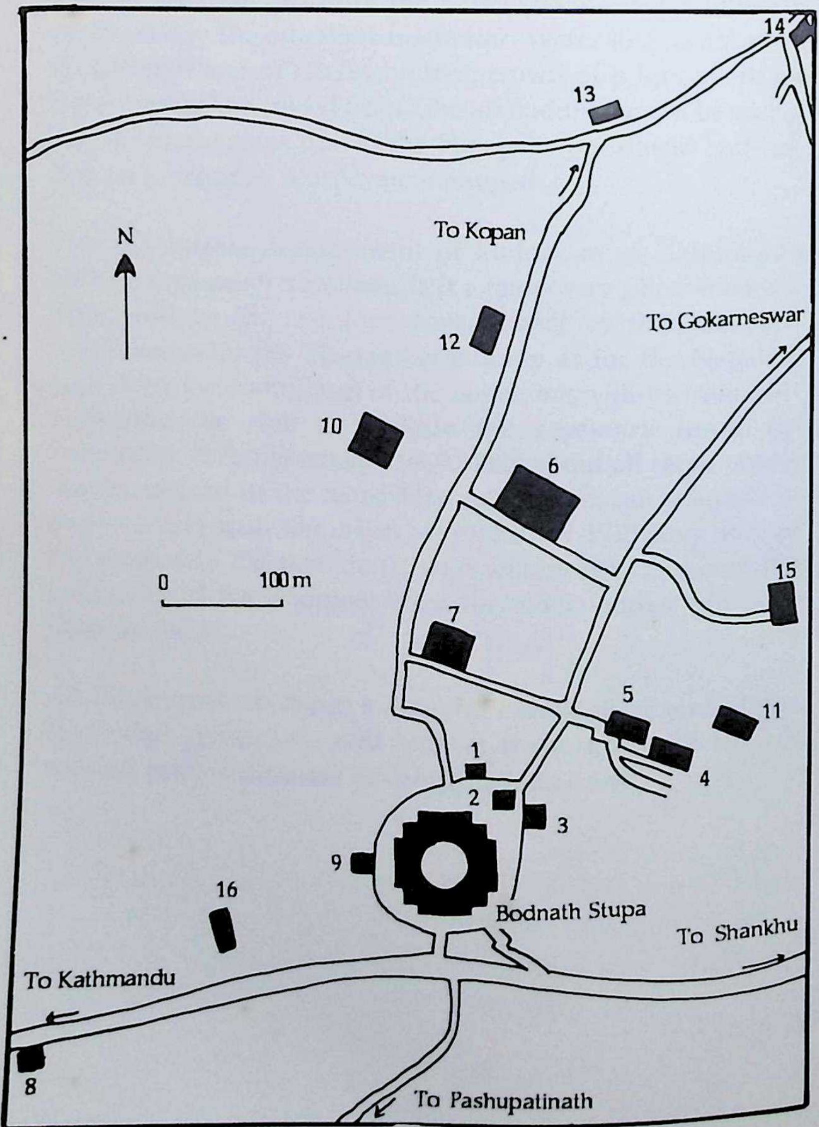
In the other holy places of the Valley, be it Swayambhunath or Pharping, the situation is similar: increasing number of monasteries and of retreat centres, crowd of pilgrims. To all these foundations issued from Tibetan Buddhism, can be added various foundations due to the Hinayana Buddhism and one Bon-po foundation near Swayambhunath.

This undeniable development of Buddhism in Kathmandu Valley raises many questions. Is it a temporary phenomenon ? What will be the religious consequence of this monastic proliferation for the Tibetan community as for the Nepalese one? After the enthusiasm of the beginning, will the monastic authorities be able to provide the necessary funds for maintening such big enterprises ? What about all those young monks, arrived in the monastery as children, but who are in daily contact with the urban way of life ? Will they stay in the monastery ? If they don't, who will be able to secure the continuity of the tradition when the older monks will have disappeared ?

All those problems deserve a careful examination, and I hope that other researchers will look at them, not only from a musical point of view as I have begun to do it.

Buddhist Monasteries around Bodnath Stupa Map of location

- 1992 -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To Gokarneswar
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16
Bodnath Stupa
To Shankhu
To Kathmandu
8
To Pashupatinath

(1) Chini Lama's Temple
(2) Bsam-gtan-gling
(3) Zla-bzang Rinpoche's (old) Monastery)
(4) Zla-bzang Rinpoche's (new) Monastery)
(5) Lta-rig Rinpoche's Monastery)
(6) O-rgyan sprul-sku's Monastery
(7) Thrangu (= Khra - 'go?) Rinpoche's Monastery
(8) Bdud-'joms Rinpoche's Monastery
(9) Bco-brgyad khri-chen Rinpoche's Monastery
(10) Dil-mgo Mkhyen-rtse Rinpoche's Monastery
(11) Dpal-ldan thub-bstan nges-don bshad-sgrub dar-rgyas gling
(12) Gnas-nang Dpa'-bo Rinpoche's Monastery
(13) Bairo Mkhyen-rtse Rinpoche's Monastery
(14) Pad-nor Rinpoche's Monastery
(15) Sde-bzhung Rinpoche's Monastery
(16) Sherpa Foundation 'Khrul-zhig Rinpoche's residence

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TRADITION AND ADAPTATION: A STUDY IN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE GURUNG CULTURE OF NEPAL

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Introduction

The Gurungs of the Gandaki region still speak their own language and carry on their traditional way of life. In the lapse of time, they migrated outside of the Gandaki region, forgot their language and traditional manners after coming into contact with other ethnic groups. The Gurungs living in Eastern Nepal speak Nepali; their customs and manners are quite different from the Gurung culture of the Gandaki region. The same case can be observed among the Gurungs of the far Western Nepal.

Thus the Gandaki region is the only place where tradition and change can be observed side by side. It is accordingly an appropriate region for the study of continuity and change in Gurung culture.

My research work has not been limited within a particular area and family. It gives a general outlook on the Gurung culture of the Gandaki region, in Western Nepal.

The setting

The term Gurung, which is broadly used by people in these days and which needs a proper study, seems a non-original term. The Gurungs call themselves "*Tamu*" in their mother language. The meaning of *Tamu* is also not clear, though it might have a relation with the Tartar, a Central Asian race.

Originally the Gurungs are the inhabitants of the upper southern slopes of the Annapurna range in the Nepal Himalaya, and a predominant group in Gandaki region. The Nepali speaking people have used the term *shesant* for the region when the Gurungs inhabit. The Gurungs had their own kingdom in the Gandaki region till the 15 century A.D., before the rise of the Shah dynasty, the present ruling family of Nepal. The language spoken by the Gurungs belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family, and shows close ressemblance with Tamang and Thakali languages.

Traditional practices in Gurung culture

Originally the Gurung culture was based on animism, without celestial deities as the Hindus and the Mahayana Buddhists have. In the primitive stage of their cultural development, the Gurungs used to respect only their deceased ancestors and the surrounding natural ressources as their protector deities, and usually they offered meat and blood of animals to the deities. The Gurungs of the Gandaki region still follow this custom in their rituals.

The main characteristic of the traditional Gurung culture is the practice of slaughtering animals in front of shrines. The small pieces of uncooked meat from the different parts of the sacrificial animal, put on split bamboo, are offered to the deities, and the blood which is offered is taken from the heart of the same animal. This peculiar practice, still living in the Gurung culture of the Gandaki region, points to the period of the hunting stage, when the meat was available only after hunting.

One of the interesting aspects of the traditional Gurung culture is the study of the liver of the sacrificial animals. According to the tradition, the horizontal and the upright lines on the surface of the liver around the bile are considered as the signs of protection, and the descending line direct from the bile is taken as the indication of suffering. The three sided overlapping part of the liver near the bile symbolizes the main three properties of the sacrificer that is *la sur*, the domestic animals, *mi sur* , the family members and *thi sur* , the land and agriculture production. If the three sided overlapping part of the liver bears no mark, it is auspicious. The mark similar to the shape of the mouth of a frog is accepted as a sign of ill-omen.

It has been previously mentioned that the Gurungs regard the surrounding natural ressources as their local deities. Generally the local deities honoured by the Gurungs are classified in two groups: those who live in the upper part *(gu: thon)* and those of the lower part *(gu: kyo)* of the village. The character of the ancient Gurung environment is to have the pastural land above the village and the cultivated land just below the village. The shrine of the deities related to the upper part of the village is located above the village under a tree, whereas the site for the deities related to the lower part of the village has been chosen below the village in an open air spot.

The worship of the local deities is performed two times a year with a sacrifice of lamb on the occasion of *Ta oma* , the summer course (Nep: *Ubhauli)* and *ma buma* , the winter course (Nep: *Udhauli). ta oma* and *ma buma* are the two main seasons relating to the transhumance life circle of the Gurungs.

Influence of Lamaistic Buddhism on traditional Gurung culture

The priests which are acting parallel in the Gurung communities of the Gandaki region could be divided in two categories: the traditional Gurung priests and the *lama* priests. The *pajyu* and *lhebrin* are the traditional priests whereas the *lama* might be a later development. Padmasambhava, the great mystical teacher of Uddiyan in India, was the founder of the Lamaistic Buddhism in the Himalayan region. He is honoured as the teacher of Vajra, the absolute emptiness.

Lamaistic Buddhism was broadly spread over China and Mongolia during the reign of Kublai Khan, who honoured the abbot of Sakya monastery in Tibet as his spiritual teacher. This event made Lamaistic Buddhism more powerful not only within the empire of Kublai Khan, but along the Himalayan region of Nepal as well. The Gurungs of Nepal also adopted the Lamaistic Buddhism. A class of spiritual teachers, *lama*, developed in the Gurung community.

On the long run *pajyu* and *lhebrin*, the traditional priests of the Gurungs, learned some lessons from the *lamas* and become 'more practical'. The traditional Gurung priests used to praise *Urgeni Paima Jhyonjini Guru* while they utter the oral myths. The word *Urgeni Paima Jhyonjini Guru* is the Gurung form of *U-rGyen-Padma-hByung-gNas*, the Tibetan name of Padmasambhava. It clearly shows the impact of Padmasambhava on Gurung culture. These traditional priests of the Gurungs adopted the idea of the five celestial Buddhas of Vajrayana in their religion and honoured Padmasambhava as their spiritual teacher. Besides this, the *lhebrin* priest uses to wear the miniature paintings of the five celestial Buddhas as a crown on his head on the occasion of religious dances, whereas the *pajyu* priest wear his traditional hat made with the feathers of the *daphe* pheasant.

The most important impact of Lamaistic Buddhism on traditional Gurung culture is that the *pajyu* and *lhebrin* borrowed the concept of *Thava Chaingiya Singa* (Tib: *bDe-Wa- Chan-Gyi-Shing-Khams)*, the paradise of happiness. The concept of *bDe-Wa-Gyi-Shing-Khams* (Skt: *Sukhavati Bhuwan)* is the characteristic feature of Mahayana Buddhism to attain happiness of Nirvana, just like the *svarga* or heaven of the Hindus. In addition of this, the *pajyu* and *lhebrin* used to spell *"Om Mani Padme Hum"*, the famous magical formula of Mahayana Buddhism.

The Gurungs have adopted the beliefs and practices of Buddhism through the *lamas,* and it was the first combination of traditional Gurung culture with new elements.

Gurung Culture and Hinduism

The Gurungs of Nepal have to survive in their region retaining the local administrative power after they lost their kingdom in Gandaki region. It was compulsary for them to follow the Hindu rules. So they adopted some Hindu manners and customs to gain the favour of the Hindu kings. These rulers also had their own interest to keep control over the Gurungs. They appointed to become *umara* and *talukdar* those Gurungs who adopted the Hindu rules.

The *umara,* the chief of a fort, and the *talukdar,* an authorized landholder of a jurisdiction, were the local agents of the Hindu monarch. The *umara* and the *talukdar* directly came into contact with the Hindu priest who performed the State rituals like Dasain at the fort. So the *umara* and the *talukdar* were indebted to the Hindu priest in their own needs. The *umara* and the *talukdar* were the most influential persons among the Gurung community, they had to maintain law and order in their jurisdiction. In this way, on the long run, the Gurungs of the Gandaki region adapted the Hindu rules and regulations in their culture.

First of all, the males of the Gurungs began to keep the *tupi*, the tuft of hair on the crown of the head, as the Hindu. Similarly the Gurung women made a hole on the outside of their left nostril to wear the *phuli,* the flower shaped nose ornament. In addition the Gurung women who dwelt in the area of the Hindus, worn *bulaki,* the nose ring from the septum of the nose.

The second impact of Hindu manners on Gurung culture is that the Gurungs gave up taking the salt during the period of the funeral rite, and they used to light *dag batti* , the cremation fire to the deceased one. The sons of the deceased person used to shave their head, beard, moustache and eyebrow, even those Gurungs who did not call the Hindu priest.

Thirdly, the Gurungs adopted Hindu astrology, which is more complex than Sino-Tibetan astrology. The Gurungs applied the formulas of Hindu astrology for the naming of a new born child, and also began to find out the omen and evil with the study of the horoscope. They used to mutter the charms of the planets and other Hindu deities to remove the bad effects of the planets and the evil spirits.

Besides this, the Gurungs celebrated Hindu festivals, wishing to acquire peace and prosperity in life. Among those Hindu festivals, the Gurungs perform Dasain which plays a multipurpose role in the polity of Nepal. The government service holders such as the *umara* and *talukdar* were responsible to celebrate Dasain in their juridiction. The *raitis,* the subjects have to come to the house of the *umara* and the *talukdar* with presents to receive *tika* , rice with curd mark on the forehead, on the occasion of Dasain. So the celebration of Dasain was really a sign of submission to the Hindu monarch.

The adoption of Hindu manners by the Gurungs was the second phase of change. It makes the Gurung culture different from the culture of the neighbouring trans-himalayan people of Nepal.

Conclusion

However, the Gurungs of the Gandaki region are still maintaining their traditional rituals; they have moulded the customs which they adapted from others in their own tradition. The Gurung culture is also going to change from a rural to an urban character as the Gurungs began to settle in the urban areas of Nepal. So the Gurung culture, with its 'primitive' characters of the remote past, is facing modernization which might be a real challenge for the new future.

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The adoption of Hindu manners by the Gurungs was the second phase of change. It makes the Gurung culture different from the culture of the neighbouring mongolian Tibetan people of Nepal.

Conclusion

However, the Gurungs of the Gandaki region are still maintaining their traditional rituals; they have modified the customs which they adopted under others in their own tradition. The Gurung culture is also going to change into a rural-urban character as the Gurungs began to settle in the urban areas of Nepal. So the Gurung culture, with its "primitive" characteristics and remote space is facing modernization which might be a real challenge for the near future.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S WORK IN THE SERVICE SECTOR

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Introduction

For about thirty years, the opposite terms, order and progress, tradition and modernity, permanence and change have been the main topics of thought on the evolution of society.

My reflection on the theoretical notions of change and my interest in the Himalayas have led me to choose Nepal for studying the process of social change.

I attempt to examine social change in Nepalese society by looking at women's paid work in urban areas. In particular, I consider working women to be agents of social change (1).

The main hypothesis of my research is that by being a wage-earner, a woman creates possibilities of action and transforms her status in domestic affairs and, in this way, changes the social and family relationships.

Up to now, except for surveys undertaken by Miss Neeru Shrestha (2), there has been no research focused on women's participation in the urban labour force. In a way, my survey is a continuation of Neeru Shrestha's work with the addition that it looks specifically into the social change in relation to women's access to gainful employment.

Evolution of women's work in Nepal

In looking at the evolution of women's work in Nepal, some facts stand out:

- Several studies in SAARC countries show that the number of women working in urban areas is growing and that there is a tendency for women to work in the service sector. This is the result of women's attraction to jobs in teaching and health services. Nepal is following this evolution; in fact women's participation in the labour force is one of the highest in the SAARC countries.

- In spite of economic growth, the employment of women increased a lot between 1971 and 1981. Such a rise essentially comes from women's participation in the urban labour force. In the city, women's participation increased by 102% during these ten years, as opposed to only 18% in rural areas during the same period. This evolution is particularly surprising as it only concerns women. In cities, the activity rate of men decreased about 15% between 1971 and 1981. Thus, we can conclude that women have made a spectacular entrance into the urban labour market, to the disadvantage of their male counterparts (3).

- The service sector (4) still has few employment opportunities to offer in Nepal: only 1.98% of the total active population are employed. Women's participation rate is 0.68% and men's 2.6%.

- The regional disparities of women's employment in the service sector are shown on map I, which shows the participation rate of women in services, a figure calculated by the number of women in the service sector divided by the total of active women. Kathmandu is the district employing the most women. There, the women's participation rate is 4.45%. The Valley districts account for a total of 22% of women working in the service sector. Sunsari and Rupandehi districts, two districts of the Terai, have a participation rate of above 1.5%. The districts of Banke and Surkhet have a participation rate of about 1.5%. The presence of urban centres

(Nepalganj, Birendranagar, Siddharthanagar, Dharan) in these districts is an important factor in the development of service activities.

The lowest rates of participation are found in the least urbanized districts. The only exceptions are the districts of Jumla, Manang and Mustang, which support a very small labour force and consequently have little effect on the total distribution of jobs in the service sector.

Thus, regional differences reflect differences in employment offered by the districts.

- Examining the evolution of "feminity rate" in these activities reveals that the percentage of working women went up by 164% between 1971 and 1981. By "feminity rate", I mean the number of women for every hundred men. This development is more significant in the districts in which women's economic participation is less than the national average (0.68%). Today, the saturation of employment opportunities in the service sector seems to have frozen the advance of the "feminity rate" in several districts; for instance, in those districts where the service sector is already very developed :the districts of the Kathmandu valley, Sunsari and Rupandehi

- Map II shows regional distribution of the 'feminity rate' in the service sector in 1981. On the average, in Nepal, there are twelve women for every hundred men in the service sector. With the exception of Rautahat and Banke, all districts of the Terai have a feminity rate inferior to the national average. In the Valley, only Kathmandu has a feminity rate barely above 12%. Surprisingly, the districts in which the women's participation rate is less than the national average are those with a feminity rate greater than 20%. There is a discrepancy between the number of jobs offered and the feminity rate.

Thus, the activity of women in the service sector seems localized. Female participation depends on the urbanization, and the economic and social development of each region but also on their cultural and migratory characteristics.

- Within this large service sector, the proportion of women employed in professional and technical occupations has almost tripled during this decade. It is conspicuous that in this category the feminity rate is now the highest.

Social characteristics of women workers

Let us now examine the social characteristics of women working in the service sector, especially in Kathmandu, the site of the survey.

- If one looks at the age-group distribution of the active female population of the Kathmandu city, one notices that women working in the service sector tend to be younger. The three- quarters belong to the 20-39 age group, while only about 46% of all active women in Kathmandu belong to this age bracket. Over-40 years, active women in this sector represent only 14.5% as opposed to the over-all average of 21.8% working in all activities.

Women in the service sector are better educated that the average working women : 42.5% have not passed the SLC and one third have at least the BA as compared to the average all sectors' figures of 88.49% for the SLC not passed and 5.26% possessing at least the BA.

Concerning marital status, there is no difference between all active women and those working in the service sector. The number of married women is twice that of single women and the number of active widows is small (2.7%). However, it is interesting to note that more than 54% of separated/divorced women work as opposed to only 35% to married, single and widowed women.

Materials and methods

Starting from these social components, I drew up a representative sample of 250 women working in the service sector in Kathmandu (5). The material I collected was :

- a quantitative survey done with the help of a questionnaire.
- 15 in-depth qualitative interviews and participant observation.
- a survey of opinion with forty IA level students (boys and girls).

My aim was to collect information about three areas professional careers, work conditions, and private life.

The professional careers of women surveyed

To approach the topic of professional careers, I asked myself : What are the distinctive characteristics of women's professional careers ? When and how did they become part of the labour market ? In other words, why do they work and what are their wishes ?

Age, marital status, educational level, family background, motivations for working, and occupation are a complex set of factors which act together to determine a women's professional career. Of all those factors, it appears that occupation is the most significant. After abandoning the Nepalese Census classification as inaccurate, I define four hierachical categories of occupation which I shall call socio-professional categories.

The first one, the personnel service category, includes all women who work as cleaners, washer-women, or sweepers, and those employed by the government to do menial works.

The second category, the white-collar workers, includes all women who work as typists, clerks, assistants, switchboard operators, and computer operators.

The middle executive category includes technicians, accountants, nurses, and primary school teachers.

The last category, the senior executive workers, includes lawyers, researchers, secondary school teachers, campus professors, doctors, headmistresses, and managers.

The personnel service workers are completely different from the senior executive workers. The former, because their husbands have irregular and low-paid jobs, have to earn money. They have no choice. Coming from poor families, they didn't have the opportunity to be educated beyond the SLC level. Most of them are illiterate. From their point of view, obtaining a good education is the only way they can escape from their present work level and get a better paid job. Their fondest wish, however, is to stay at home and not work.

A senior executive worker on the other hand, because she comes from a wealthy social sphere has a well-defined professional conscience. She attains higher positions, step by step, by accepting numerous professional transfers.

The white-collar category is very heterogenous due to the great variety in educational levels and motivation. We find both poorly-educated women working because of economic necessity and women who are over-qualified for the job they occupy. These latter are very motivated and follow a true professional strategy in order to attain their coveted goals.

Of the middle executive workers, primary school teachers form a sub-category. They have a general level of education, but do not go on to specialize at the university level as other middle executive workers do. Easy access to primary school teaching rather than a true vocation guides their choice.

The average age of women entering the work market is 21,5 years, but this varies according to the socio-professional category : The higher the hierarchic job level, the greater the age of the person entering it.

An examination of jobs and caste status of women holding them reveals the basis of the caste system: the notion of the pure and the impure. All women of impure caste, except two, hold jobs in the personnel category. However, 28% of women in the personnel category come from high castes. They occupy menial jobs for which belonging to a high caste is necessary e.g. cooks, maids, messengers.

We took our sample from a majority of Brahmin-Chetri and Newari women. Other ethnic groups represent only 12%. More than 65% of the sample are women of the high castes of society (6).

Work conditions

Each socio-professional category has specific work conditions. What is the commom denominator of the lower and upper categories' work conditions ?

In addition to varying over socio-professional categories, work conditions are different for civil servants and workers in private sectors. The former have social advantages that the latter don't have : time schedules, paid vacations, security of employment, pension funds, and prestige. Among the civil servants, teachers, except those in primary schools, have the highest wages per hour.

The salaries of the sample range from 650 Rs a month for messengers in government service to 3500 Rs monthly, for a senior executive in the private sector (7).

Concerning the daily commuting to work, we discovered that more than half of the sample choose work close to their homes (less than 20 minutes on foot). The time necessary to reach the workplace is not systematically proportional to the distance covered. That is senior executives, who often live the farthest from their workplaces, often use cars and other private means of transportation, thus spending less time commuting . Those who used the public transportation, spend at least 45 mn travelling if we include the distance between their homes and bus stops, time waiting for the bus, the duration of the bus journey and the distance between bus station and place of work.

The daily life of working women

Observing women's daily lives, we see a contradiction in a society which claims that women should contribute to national development by working outside the home but which makes no attempt to change the traditional assignment of work in the private sphere. Consequently, the division of work between the two sexes at home stays unchanged. Help from husbands is minimal in most cases. Several women made us understand that it would be difficult for them to ask for help from their husband because it might mean that they would have to stop working outside their home.

Due to the lack of day-care centers to care for children and electrical appliances to simplify housework, a women has access to a support system only if other women are available in the household.

In joint families, women develop a sharing system to distribute the household duties. This situation sometimes creates personal conflicts between working and non working women. If it's too difficult to weld their two opposite roles, the reproductive role of wife and mother, and the productive role of wage-earner, the latter is abandoned.

Nevertheless, all family members have to adjust if a woman is working. That's why some traditional features of family organisation are trangressed, except on Saturdays and during holidays. For example, women are supposed to eat only after the men and children; because of their work-schedules, they do not have the time to wait until the whole family has taken their meal to start to eat. They also cook meals other than *dal-bhat,* which takes time to prepare. Noodles are now favoured because of their low cost and quick cooking.

On the other hand, women's professional activities don't change the rhythm of their daily puja. Half of the women pray twice a day (morning and evening). They buy *batti* and *bateko dhup* because they no longer have the time to prepare them themselves. The ones who do not observe any domestic ritual (18% of the sample) belong in the majority to the impure castes but one third belong to the high castes.

All women agree that living in joint families makes their lives easier even if the generation and personal conflicts are sometimes difficult to accept. The main advantages are the care of the children and the preparation of the meals, especially in the morning.

In nuclear families (8), the sample working women often benefit by domestic help, a maid or a family member (often a widow). These latter do most of the domestic chores.

On Saturdays, most of the women have to do what they cannot do during the week : thoroughly cleaning the house and washing all the laundry. Their leisure activities include reading, taking walks, having picnics, gossiping with the neighbours and watching TV.

Marital status and a married woman's position in the family (mother-in-law, only daughter in law, elder son's wife, etc...), number and age of children, composition and size of the household, castes and material living conditions are a complex set of factors which work together to constitute the fabric of the daily lives of working women.

The efficiency of collective equipment, the availability of part-time employment, and the possibility of earning money at home, are the main wishes of our sample population.

Concluding remarks

The characteristics of traditional social relationships are not revolutionized just by the fact that women work outside the home. This work, however does help to define adjustments which need to be made between the traditional organization of the family and the new requirements of a developing country.

These required adjustments can effectively define new living conditions which take into account the professional responsibilities of women.

The survey tends to show that the effect of women as wage-earners on social relationships must be studied keeping in mind their respective social backgrounds. Changes in social relationships seem to appear mostly in wealthy middle class families. In less economically fortunate household, women traditionally do work.

This is why, in order to perfect sociological analysis, I would like my survey to contribute to a classification of social agents. This classification, which should take into consideration the professional, social, and economic status of individuals, would facilitate sociological research in Nepal, particularly in urban areas where the characteristics of social agents are greater and often very different from those in rural Nepal.

References

(1) This paper is a summary of data collected in 1990 from women working in the service sector in Kathmandu. As the analysis is not yet completed, only a general sociological interpretation is offered here. I would like to express my thanks to CNAS, with which I was affiliated during my fieldwork, and also to Mr Pradhan from the Research Division who helped me to completed the long process of admistrative formalities.

(2) SHRESTHA (N.), *Women in Teaching,* Kathmandu, C.E.D.A., 1982. *An Analysis of Women's Employment in Financial Institutions,* Kathmandu, C.E.D.A., 1982. *Women's Employment in Industrial Sector,* Kathmandu, C.E.D.A., 1983. *Integration of Women in Basic Needs Activities and Co-operation Development of Nepal* , Kathmandu, C.E.D.A., 1985. "Women in employment", in *The Journal of Development and Administrative Studies,* Kathmandu, C.E.D.A., June and December 1982, Vol. 4, N 1 et 2, pp. 225-243.

(3) Population Census 1971 and 1981.

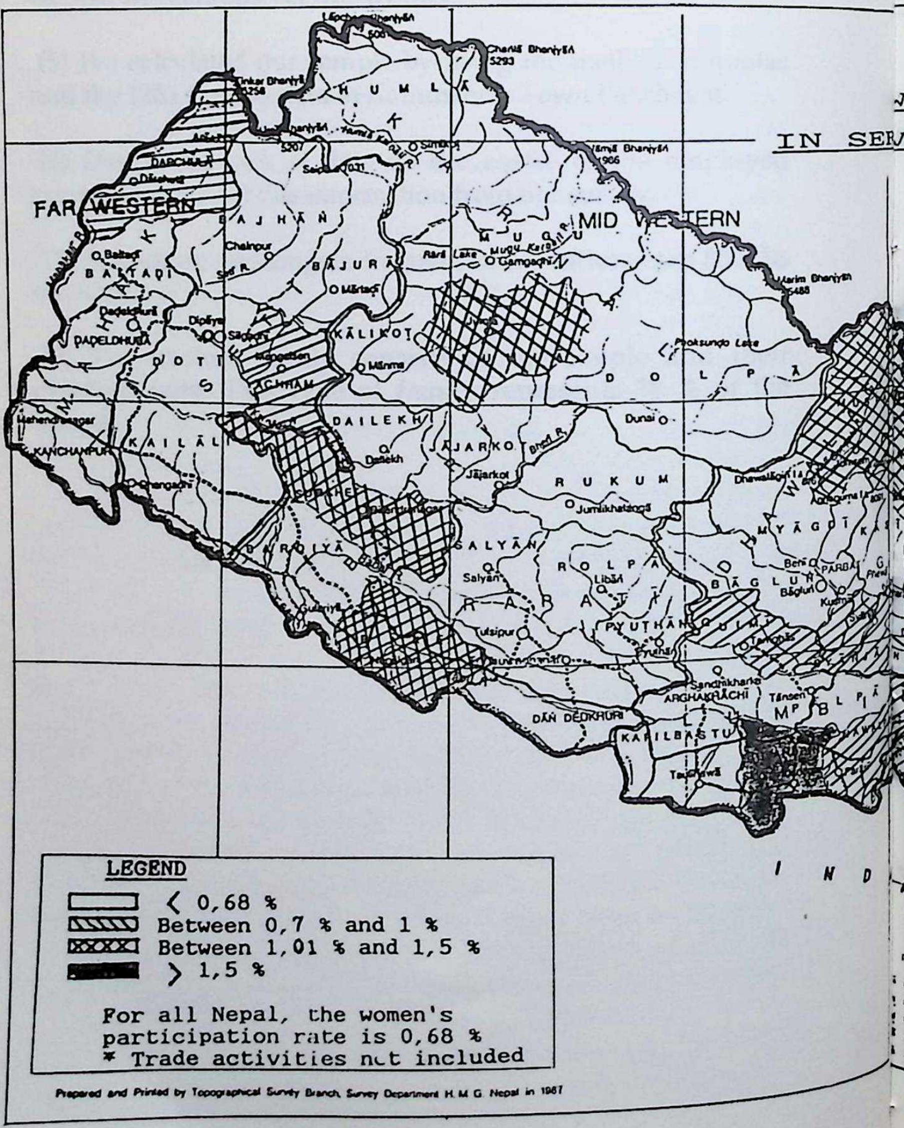
(4) Trade activity not included. We have only considered professional and technical workers, administrative workers, clerical workers and service workers.

(5) We calculated our sample by using the method of quotas and the 1981 Census data in Kathmandu Town Panchayat.

(6) Due to the lack of data on the castes of the employed population, we got this information from our survey.

(7) Nowadays, messengers in government offices earn 88O Rs monthly.

(8) The nuclear family consists of the couple and their children only. This type of family represents 38 % of the sample.


IN SER
FAR WESTERN
MID WESTERN
HUMLĀ
BAJHĀN
BĀJURĀ
BAITAḌI
DAḌELDHURĀ
DOTI
ACHHĀM
KĀLIKOT
DAILEKH
JĀJARKOT
KAILĀLI
KANCHANPUR
SURKHET
BARDIYĀ
SALYĀN
ROLPA
RUKUM
DOLPĀ
MYĀGDI
BĀGLUNG
PYUTHĀN
DĀN DEUKHURI
ARGHAKHĀCHI
KAPILBASTU
RĀPTI
KARNĀLI
SETI
MAHĀKĀLI
DHAWALĀGIRI
LUMBINI
Rārā Lake
Phoksundo Lake
Mahendranagar
Dhangadhi
Dipāyal
Silgaḍhi
Chainpur
Mārtadi
Mānma
Jumla
Dailekh
Jājarkot
Dunai
Salyān
Libāṅ
Tulsipur
Jumlikhalāṅgā
Beni
Bāglung
Tānsen
Taulihawā
Sandhikharka
Gulariyā
PĀLPĀ
PARBAT
I N D

LEGEND

▭ < 0,68 %

▨ Between 0,7 % and 1 %

▩ Between 1,01 % and 1,5 %

■ > 1,5 %

For all Nepal, the women's participation rate is 0,68 %

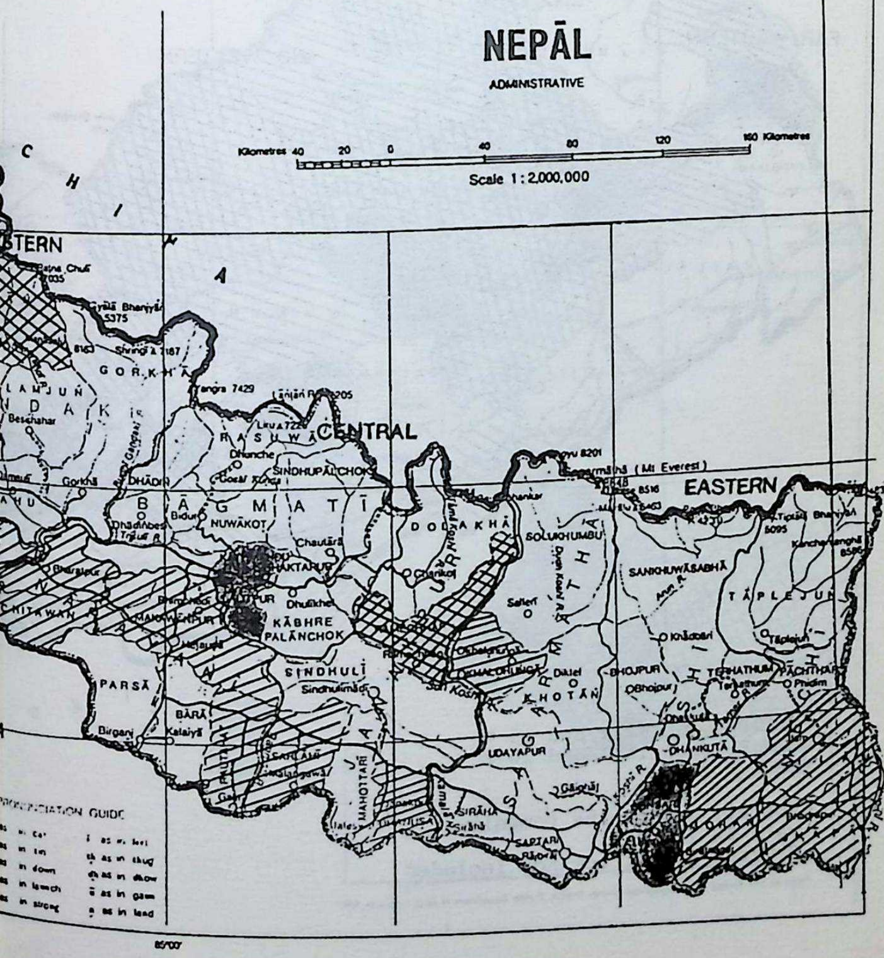
* Trade activities not included

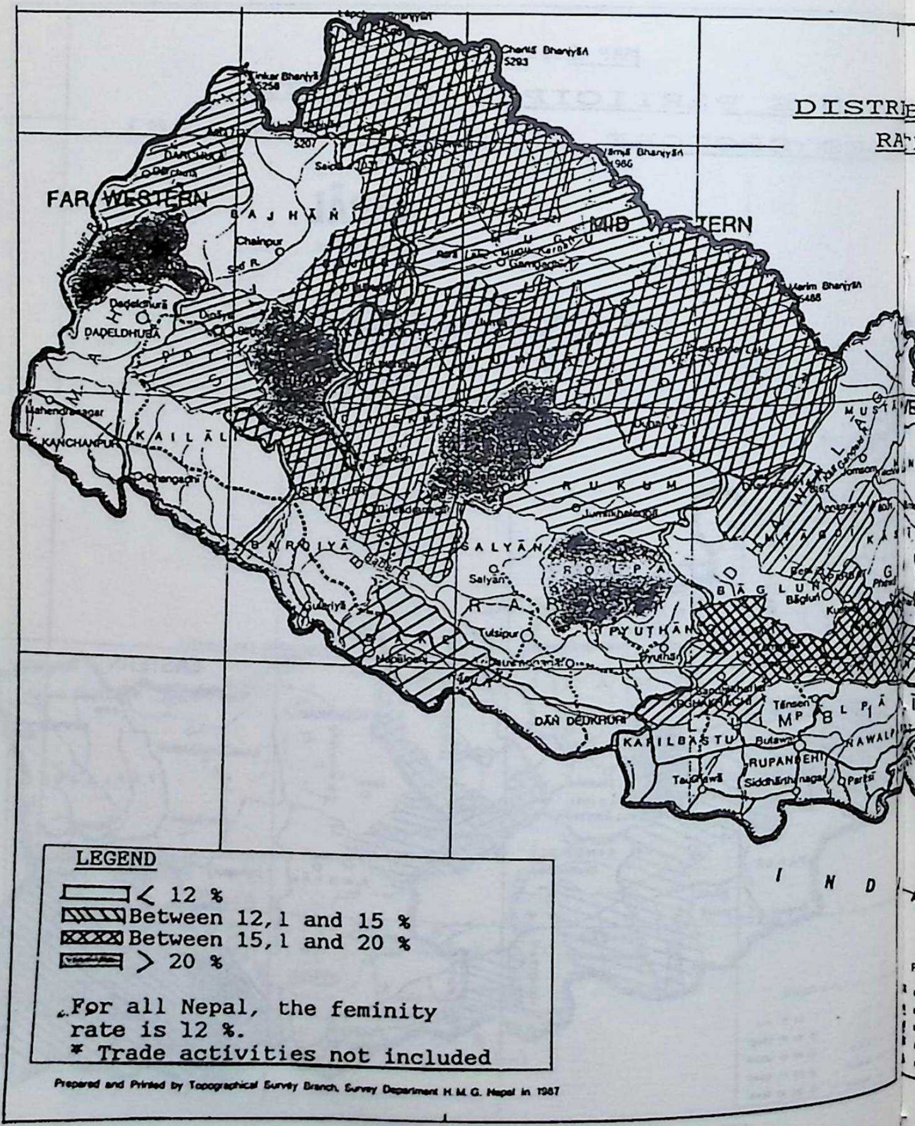
Prepared and Printed by Topographical Survey Branch, Survey Department H. M. G. Nepal in 1987

MAP I

OMEN'S PARTICIPATION RATE

ICES SECTOR* BY DISTRICTS, 1981.

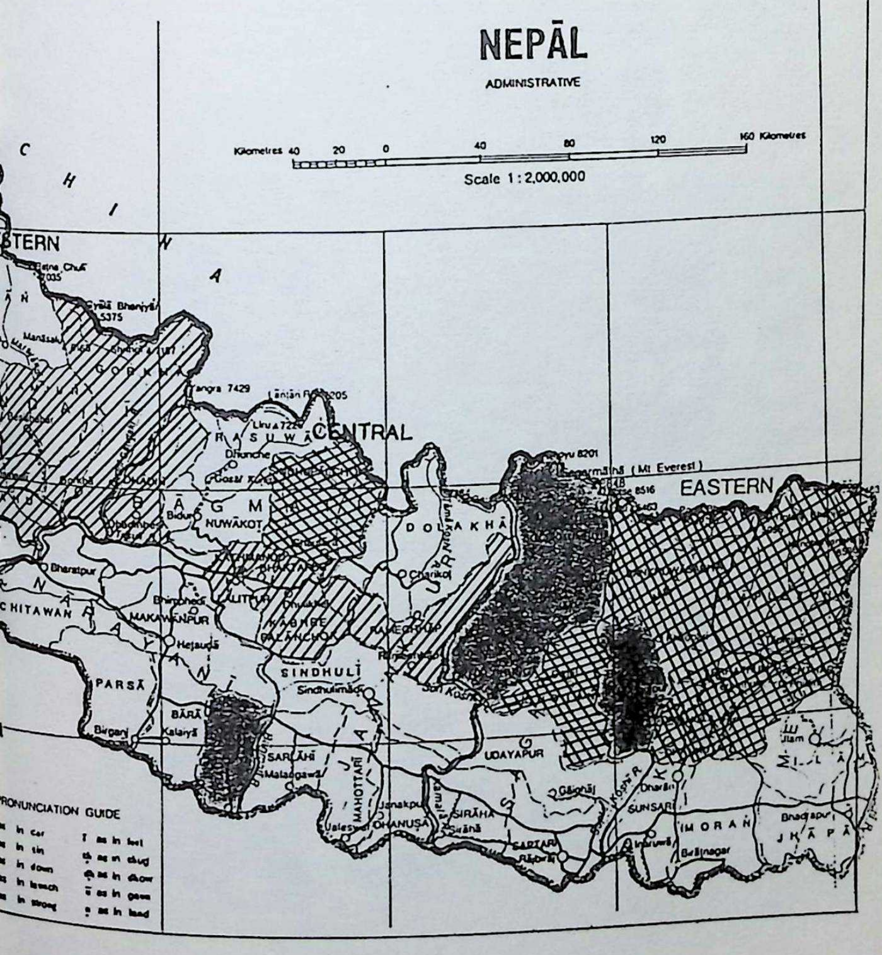

NEPĀL
ADMINISTRATIVE
Kilometres 40 20 0 40 80 120 160 Kilometres
Scale 1:2,000,000
C H I N A
WESTERN
CENTRAL
EASTERN
G O R K H A
L A M J U Ṅ
G A N D A K I
R A S U W A
SINDHUPĀLCHOK
B Ā G M A T Ī
NUWĀKOT
DHĀDIṄ
BHAKTAPUR
LALITPUR
KĀBHRE PALĀNCHOK
DOLAKHĀ
SOLUKHUMBU
SANKHUWĀSABHĀ
TĀPLEJUṄ
TERHATHUM
PĀNCHTHAR
BHOJPUR
KHOTĀṄ
OKHALDHUṄGĀ
SINDHULĪ
MAHOTTARĪ
DHANUSĀ
SIRĀHĀ
SAPTARĪ
UDAYAPUR
DHANKUṬĀ
MORAṄ
JHĀPĀ
ILĀM
SARLĀHĪ
RAUTAHAṬ
BĀRĀ
PARSĀ
CHITAWAN
MAKAWĀNPUR
Sagarmāthā (Mt Everest)
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE
85/007


DISTR
RA
FAR WESTERN
MID WESTERN
Tinkar Bhanjyang 5258
Charka Bhanjyang 5293
Marim Bhanjyang 5488
DARCHULA
BAJHANG
Chainpur
Seti R.
Rara Lake
Gamgadhi
Dadeldhura
DADELDHURA
Dipayal
Mahendranagar
KANCHANPUR
KAILALI
Dhangadhi
BARDIYA
Gulariya
SURKHET
SALYAN
Salyan
RUKUM
ROLPA
PYUTHAN
Pyuthan
Tulsipur
DANG DEUKHURI
Nepalganj
KAPILBASTU
Taulihawa
RUPANDEHI
Siddharthanagar
Butwal
Tansen
PALPA
NAWALPARASI
BAGLUNG
Baglung
MUSTANG
Jomsom
Kusma
MYAGDI
ARGHAKHANCHI
Sandhikharka
I N D
LEGEND
▭ < 12 %
▨ Between 12,1 and 15 %
▩ Between 15,1 and 20 %
■ > 20 %
For all Nepal, the feminity rate is 12 %.
* Trade activities not included

Prepared and Printed by Topographical Survey Branch, Survey Department H.M.G. Nepal in 1987

MAP II

BUTION BY DISTRICTS OF FEMINITY
E IN SERVICES SECTOR 1981.


NEPĀL
ADMINISTRATIVE
Kilometres 40 20 0 40 80 120 160 Kilometres
Scale 1:2,000,000
C H I N A
STERN
CENTRAL
EASTERN
RASUWA
NUWAKOT
DOLAKHA
CHITAWAN
MAKAWANPUR
KABHRE PALANCHOK
SINDHULI
PARSĀ
BĀRĀ
SARLĀHI
MAHOTTARI
DHANUSĀ
SIRĀHA
SAPTARI
UDAYAPUR
SUNSARI
MORAṄ
JHĀPĀ
Sagarmāthā (Mt Everest)
Bharatpur
Hetauḍā
Birganj
Kalaiyā
Malangawā
Janakpur
Sindhulimāḍhi
Charikot
Gāighāṭ
Dharān
Biratnagar
Bhadrapur
Ilām
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

FRENCH ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN NEPAL

The Example of Gulmi and Argha Khanci.

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On several occasions the French scholars, as well as other foreign scholars, have been questionned about the finality of their studies and how fundamental research could contribute to development of a country at a scale commonly used by planners (1) . In 1979, the French research team "Himalaya-Karakorum" decided to undertake a comprehensive study of the Salankhu Khola watershed in Nuwakot district. Emphasis was given on the ecological and agronomic aspects and collaboration established with the Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, HMG Nepal (2).

In 1983, having received assurances for a possible financial aid from the French government to help the agricultural sector in Nepal, the team thought that it gave an opportunity to participate in a development project by assessing the needs of the population prior to any action. The team approached Nepalese institutions and proposed a research programme, without success. At last the "Small farmers development project" (SFDP) and the Agricultural Development Bank-Nepal showed interest and suggested a series of districts where the SFDP programme was about to be launched and where a state of knowledge would be useful before the inception of the project. The choice fell on the districts of Gulmi and Argha-Kanci in the Lumbini zone. Both districts at that time (1984-1985) had not benefited from aid programme (national as well as international). In these two districts increasing population pressure on a limited land base had aggravated the degradation processes, leading to a low productivity and a misutilization of the existing forest lands. The previous studies undertaken by the CNRS team in the Himalayan region had already developed a concern about complex questions involving the dynamics of human behaviours in harsh environments and the changes made by man of these environments, to contribute in some way in the development process. These questions were related to the inter-relationships of limited natural resources, the processes going on in these environments, the way of life and culture of the ethnic groups in the area, the economic process, the response of the inhabitants to pressures which induce change.

Research in Gulmi and Argha Khanci: Methodology

The study focused on two districts, Gulmi and Argha Kanci, extending over 2300 km2 with a population of 400 000 inhabitants (1989). The field-work was carried out over a period of four years from December 1985 to the end of 1989. Specialists in Geomorphology, Geography, Ecology, Agronomy, Economy, Social Sciences spent time in the field with Nepalese counterparts from the Royal Nepalese Academy and Tribhuvan University.

The analysis was done by small groups of researchers and regular contacts with the local population were established. These contacts benefited to the French agronomists later engaged in the development project, from 1990 onwards.

The study of the existing litterature was undertaken and a series of data collected. What was at hand was the gross scale of the data which tend to hide important regional or local variations. The team took advantage of the just completed Land Resources Mapping Project (LRMP) and requested the Topographical survey HMG to prepare a "baseline profile" of the two districts. Basically biophysical, the information gathered was updated bythe concerned line agencies of HMG. (3)

The team was convinced that without detailed appreciation of the ecological and historical dimensions it was impossible to understand the socio-economic progresses and changes. Thus, in the phasing of the research a high priority was given to the three themes:

- the description of physical landscapes,
- the historical dimension,
- the analysis of the present livelihoods of the population.

Geography

The districts of Gulmi and Argha Khanci are situated in the Lower Himalaya, 27°45'-28°15' North / 82°45'-83°40' East, and comprise the watersheds of the Bari Gad (in its lower section), Riri Khola and Sita Khola.

The major topographic reliefs are determined by thrust faults. The physiographic regions can be delineated as follows:

- the Terai (60 to 200 meters), part of the Gangetic plain with a subtropical climate,

- the Churya (200-1300 meters), the outmost foothills of the Himalayan range,

- the middle hills (800 to 2000 meters) strongly dissected with a variety of soils, altitude and exposition which give a great range of agro-ecological conditions and an intense cultivation of the arable areas.

- the mountain range up to 2700 meters with steep slopes, with a cool, almost temperate climate. Arable cultivation is practiced up to 2400 meters on slopes which may exceed 30°. The often badly degradated forest areas and pastures are used for summer grazing.

The monsoon climate regime with precipitations between 1600mm and 2000mm/year concentrated in less than three months has a profound effect on the lives of the inhabitants. (4)

A succession of different latitudinal and altitudinal belts lead to specific environmental situations. Only the higher crest lines in the Northern part of the area of Gulmi are densely forested.

In the past thirty years, according to the local informants, all the land which was cultivable was turned into fields.

History of Human Occupance

The history of human occupance is difficult to ascertain. The team has tried to collect data tracing the arrival of the different groups of population through the time, and doing so, establish the key characteristics of the populations living at present in the two districts. There is, up to now, no archaeological evidence to support a precise chronology. However the genealogies enable to trace back the presence of some of the Indo-Nepalese castes to the 15th century.

The oral tradition indicates also the presence of Tibeto-Burmese groups in a somewhat confusing way which one has to accept until further findings.

These groups of different origin formed a poly-ethnic society, stratified, with castes and ethnic groups such as the Magar, the Gurung, the Newar (originally from the Kathmandu valley).

Before 1804 AD the region was dominated by six Thakuri chieftains. The petty hill principalities known as Chaubisi (lit. the" twenty four") emerged in the Gandaki drainage, part of a series of small states stretching from East to West along the Himalaya. These principalities came to an end with the Gorkha unification in the late 18th century. The annexion of the Chaubisi principalities by the House of Gorkha shifted the focus of power to Kathmandu and contributed to a certain isolation of the region. This might explain that the population, until recently, had no precise concept of the nation-state.

The present day cultural landscape still reflects different ways of life with specific cultural characteristics such as social stratification, religious beliefs and practices, livelihood strategies, social and economic institutions and hierarchies and political power. All these are the expression of a series of migrations and political dominations with their attendent cultural adaptation.

To understand the process of interaction with the environment it was necessary to study the sequence of events that led to today's situation.

The Hindu caste system is prevalent with its status hierarchy, with its concepts or ritual status, purity and pollution. Gradually the ethnic groups have been locked into this structure, determining the individual's behaviour and obligations. And for the higher castes, dominant in number (about 80% in Argha Khanci, 60 to 62% in Gulmi), wealth, political power and rank converge. The Brahmans maintained a monopoly on religion and education. Thus had they access to the real power in a feudal structure. They received royal grants of land *(birta)* which they held in perpetuity.

The Thakuri (royal power) preserved for a long period the political leadership supported by the Chetri. The occupational castes, Kami blacksmiths, Sarki leather workers, Damai tailors, Gaine musicians were an integral part of the caste system. The Kumal and Bote originally from the Terai migrated along the rivers and became dependent from the upper castes.

The Tibeto-Burmese groups, Magar (20% of the population) and a few Gurung, underwent a progressive hinduization. The Magar who still exhibit Tibeto-Burmese clan kinship patterns, livelihood technologies and diet (consumption of alcohol and meat) adopted Hindu social and religious beliefs (5).

The village government was of the traditional headman and of the village elder's council type. These leadership positions were, and still are, held by men from high caste and affluent families, key men in the economic framework of the villages (families with enough property that they produce economic surplus). The male children were given traditional education (by Brahmans or in Brahmanic schools). Members of this same elite were elected to the village panchayats in the early 1960ies and continue to play today a primordial role in the present political set-up and the composition of the social fabric is certainly not reflected in the group which is making decisions.

The present population of 400.000 occupies the area according to physical conditions and availability of land. The Brahman, Thakuri and Chetri castes occupy the valleys and hills where irrigation is possible. The Magar and Gurung have their settlements in the upper part of the valleys and on the high ridges.

Most of the multi-caste, multi-ethnic population live dispersed in small clusters of houses to form a total of 120 "village development committees" (former panchayat) for the 2 districts.

The village sites are determined by the location of good farm land, proximity of water and grazing lands including forests.

Economy

The economy of the Gulmi and Argha Khanci population is based on intensive agriculture (97% of the population living on agriculture). However a number of environmental limitations and a rapid population increase prevent agriculture from providing a subsistence level of existence for about 70% of the households. The families have a few if any reserves to deal with crises such as crop failure, loss of income through unexpected expenditures... The following table presents the basic data concerning the land use (6).

	Gulmi	Argha Khanci
total area	107 918 ha	123 272 ha
cultivable land	31 470 ha	24 244 ha
forests	40 633 ha	73 185 ha
grazing land	11 963 ha	9 742 ha
non cultivated	22 704 ha	15 702 ha

The farmers of the two districts are under the stress of diverse spatial and ecological conditions. They grow a variety of crops: paddy, maize, finger millet, wheat, barley, buckwheat (sweet and sour varieties). In addition to this major summer and winter grains a number of pulses (black gram, green gram, horse gram, lentils, beans, soya beans, peas) are cultivated as well as potatoes and spices.

Of the total cultivated land less than 7% is seasonably irrigated land on which paddy is grown and double cropping possible.

The salient aspect of family holdings is their comparatively small size - the average amount is less than 0,7 ha, though it varies considerably with caste.

The potential for agriculture is important and villagers have started to grow a variety of fruits: bananas, mangos, guavas, lemon. Coffee has been introduced in 1961 and has attracted considerable interest among the farmers of the low lands.

A variety of domestic animals cattle, buffalo, goats, poultry and pigs are kept in the area. The livestock distribution is the following (7)

	Gulmi	Argha Khanci
cattle	96 173	32 300
buffalo	89 500	42 700
goat	27 700	36 700
sheep	3 900	1 800
number of farm units	34 713	22 660

It is the most mismanaged sector in the agricultural system: shortages of fodder, bad sanitation, low quality breeds result in a bad livestock production record.

The forest coverage seems important at first sight but the impact of the escalating population on the forest zone is tremendous. The forests are exploited for fuel for cooking and heating, building materials for the home, grazing fodder and bedding for livestock and minor forest products. Productivity of the arable land is sustained by fertility transfers from these areas via livestock and compost.

The agricultural production is not able to produce goods in excess to create an important inter-regional trade system. The main trade flow is oriented from India and South Nepal towards the two districts with consumers goods. The construction of roads, which started ten years ago, has increased the movement of commodities from the South towards Gulmi and Argha Khanci.

The poor agricutural base coupled with the demographic pressure have forced a permanent out-migration.

Since the end of the 19th century, young men joined the mercenary service in the British and Indian armies. The remittances and savings helped to cover the needs of the families left behind (8). Up to now the migrations were non permanent and were part of the strategy to relieve the economic stress. However in the recent years some families have left definitely to settle in the Terai, expecting better living conditions.

The essentially subsistence agriculture depends on a close inter-relationship between crop production, livestock husbandry and in some regions forestry; maintaining the present system depends on the exploitation of grassland (mostly public areas) for which there is no adequate management.

Research and development

The explanatory description of the districts of Gulmi and Argha Khanci finalized in1990 had the aim to touch upon the processes that produce the physical and cultural landscapes and to identify the major issues concerning development.

It is in this context that the Ministry of local Development, Government of Nepal, and the Small Farmers Development Programme decided to support development activities through different line agencies. The aim was more to motivate people than to undertake direct actions.

One can state that, compared to other regions, Gulmi and Argha Khanci are very progressive; farmers have since years introduced adapted technologies (pump-sets, turbines, gopargaz...), improved varieties of seeds and selected cattle.

The "Gulmi-Argha Khanci Development project" was initiated by the Ministry of Local Development, HMG, with the participation of the European Economic Community in order "to enable the Government of Nepal to build up local institutions, to promote economic and social development...and essentially focused on consciousness raising..."

To conclude this short presentation let us come back to the initial steps of the research and the issues raised on communication between research and developers. In spite of the efforts made by the team and its will to communicate with the agency habilitated by the EEC, the work done by the researchers has not "inspired" the developers except very indirectly through a dialogue with the "users" and the local decision makers. After 1950, external events both national and regional (relations with India and China) combined with an accelerating population explosion perturbed the way of life in the Hills of Nepal. These events brought irreversible changes. Some were positive such as health, education, better agricultural production, others were negative. Efforts to develop isolated regions often destroy a delicate and fragile way of life. Let us hope that the districts of Gulmi and Argha

Khanci will not become another region where the aims and results of development efforts are far apart.

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